

*Hic verus est cultus, in quo mens colentis, seipsam
Deo immaculatam victimam sistit. Lact.*



A Serious and Compassionate

INQUIRY

Into the Causes of the present Neglect
and Contempt of the

Protestant Religion

AND

CHURCH

OF

ENGLAND:

Thomas WITH *Rolle*. 1679. ⁵2.8

Several seasonable Considerations offer'd to all
English Protestants; tending to perswade them to
a Compliance with and Conformity to the Reli-
gion and Government of this Church as it is
established by the Laws of the

R I P O D D.

Tertul. Scorpiac. adv. Gnostic.

*Non in occasione frustrandi Martyrii jubet te (Apostolus, scil.) subjeci
Magistratibus; sed in provocatione bene vivendi.*

Sine ira & studio, quorum causas procul habeo. Tacit. Ann. 1.

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Angel in Amen-Corner. MDC LXX V.

INstead of an Epistle to the Reader, as
the manner is, I humbly submit the en-
suing Discourse to the Censure of my
Superiors in the Church of England, and to
the consideration of all the Non-conformists
of whatsoever Sect or Denomination: ho-
ping the former will pardon the imperfec-
tions of it; and that the latter may (by Gods
blessing) reap some benefit by it.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

WHEREIN

The Antient estate of Christianity
in general is compared with the present;
and the condition of the Reformed Reli-
gion in this Kingdom in the first times of
it, is compared with that of the present
Age; And the Change lamented.



*Whoever seriously considers the
Certainty and Excellency of
the Christian Religion in its
own nature, and withal ob-
serves with how just Vene-
ration it was received, with
what Ardour imbraced, with what Courage
and Constancy maintained and practised,
B then,*

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then, when all the Powers on Earth sought to suppress it, when the wit and Malice of the world was combined against it, and when to be a Christian, was the plain way to ruine, and the loss of whatsoever uses to be dear to men in this world; And shall compare herewith, the present state of Christendom, now since the offence of the Cross is ceased, and the Faith of Christ is become the Profession of Kings and Princes, and (besides all other either arguments of its truth, or inducements to embrace it) is confirmed by the successive Suffrages of so many Ages, and the concurrent Votes of so great a part of Mankind: He, I say, that shall take the little pains to make this Comparison, cannot choose but be astonished at the contrary face of things, and be ready to say with Linacer, Aut hoc non est Evangelium, aut nos non sumus Evangelici, Either Christian Religion is not what it was, or men are not what they were wont to be.

For besides the palpable Contradiction of the Lives of the generality of Christians now, to the Rules of their Religion, laid down in the writings of the New Testament, which is such, as would make an indifferent man suspect that they believed those Books to contain absolute impossibilities, or at least, not
the

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the things that are necessary to salvation; since so few take the Rule of their Lives, or the Measures of their Actions thence; Besides this, I say, he that shall observe how the Primitive Christians for several Ages after our Saviour are reported to have lived, and how far short the latter Ages fall of those Examples, will be tempted either to pronounce the Histories of those Times meer Romances; or the Men of these times to be anything, rather than what they call themselves.

Such a general Declension there hath been, that the complaint of Tully, concerning the Philosophers of his time, may justly be applied to the Christians of ours, That they made disciplinam suam, ostentationem scientiæ, non legem vitæ; non obtemperant sibi ipsis, sed in eo peccant, cujus profitentur scientiam. That whereas Christian Religion was calculated for no other Meridian, designed to no other purpose, than the bettering and improving the Tempers and Lives of Men, it is perverted rather to an Apology for our Loosness, than applied to the Cure of our Disorders.

I cannot please my self with so odious a Comparison as the Case in hand would ad-

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mit of; nor will I trouble the Reader with long stories of the admirable Conversation of those early Christians, which whose will take the pains, may find in Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Origen and others: And he that is willing to decline that trouble, may find nearer hand in the Collections of a judicious and faithful Writer, in his Book called, Primitive Christianity.

But it may not be unuseful to remark some few particulars.

Of old to be a Christian, was to be all that is holy, just and good, to be adorned with all those Virtues that can render a man acceptable to God, or lovely amongst men. Whereever this Religion came, it was a Principle of Purity in mens hearts, of Honesty in their lives, and of Peace in Kingdoms and Societies. It raised mens minds to a Contemplation and Pursuit of another world, and enabled them both to despise the present, and to be a blessing to it. It did not teach men to speak great swelling words, but to live, to do and to suffer admirably; that the very Pagans (their mortal Enemies,) were astonished at them; and some of them gave them this testimony, *Hi sunt qui vivunt ut loquantur, & loquantur ut vivunt;*

The Intruduction.

vunt; These are the men that are as good as their word, and live as high and generously as others talk.

The Christian Faith was not then a meer trick of Wit, nor a bone of Contention; but a Principle of sincere Honesty, which guided men into the knowledge of their Duty, and inspired them with courage and resolution to perform it. Give me, saith Lactantius, a fierce and contentious man, and if he will but apply himself to the Grace and Institutions of the Gospel, he shall become as mild as a Lamb: Give me a Drunkard or a Lascivious person, with this Doctrine I will make him chaste and sober: Let a Covetous man hearken to this Doctrine, and he shall presently dispend his money as charitably, as before he raked it together sordidly: Give me a timorous and cowardly person, this Religion shall presently make him valiant and despise death and danger. And so he goes on. In those daies Believing was not an excuse for Disobedience, or a commutation for a holy Life; but a foundation of Obedience to all the Laws of God and man.

*Lib. 3. 26.
cap. de falsa
sap.*

Then all the Professors of Christianity had

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one heart and one lip, and then they built towards Heaven in a good sense; but since, distraction of Mind, alienation of Affections, and confusion of Language hath made a Babel of a Church. There was then but one division of men, ~~evils~~ and ~~good~~ were the only Sects the world was divided by; all good men were of one way, and evil men of another. But now there are almost as many Opinions as Men, as many Parties as Opinions, and as many Religions as either.

Orat. I.

Time was, when men sacrificed their Lives in testimony to their Faith, as frankly, as since they have done to their Passions, Revenge or Ambition. Then was Charity counted as essential a part of Religion, as Censoriousness is now with too many. Brotherly love and mutual dearneſs was a characteristical Note of those then, that now may be as well known by their distractions and animosities. St. Gregory Nazianzen said of those Times, That if one Christian took notice of the errour, sin or failing of another, it was to bewail it, to heal it, to cover his shame, and cure his wound, and prevent a scandal to his Profession; but he observed, that after times made triumphs of mens weakness and follies; and men learnt to justify their own wickedneſs by the miscarriages

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ages of their Brethren ; and that he that would prove himself of the highest form of Christians , set himself down in the seat of the scorner.

Nothing was then thought too good or costly for the service of God or Religion : Men would not content themselves to serve God with that which cost them nothing. It was only Julian , or such another , that envied the costly Vessels , wherewith Christ was served. Works of Piety and Mercy and Charity cost them as much as Luxury and Contention now a dayes. When the Gentiles in Tertullian's time , upbraided the Christians , that they made choice of a cheap Religion , and renounced the Pagan Sacrifices , because they would not undergo the charge of them ; and complained that the Frugality of the Christian worship caused a decay of Trade for the Eastern Gumms and Spices , that used to be spent in the service of the Gods , and that by this means the Customs of the Emperours were also diminished : To all this he makes this answer : We Christians spend more in the relief of the poor , than you Gentiles do upon your Gods : And though we use not Gumms and Spices for Incense , yet we as much promote Trade by the vast proportions of those commodities we spend in the

In Apolog.

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imbalming our dead. And lastly, if it should happen that the Emperors Exchequer should lose any thing, either by the temperance of our Lives, or the nature of our Religion, yet we make it up another way; for we make conscience of paying him his just dues: whereas you cheat and defraud him of more than the proportion of your expences above ours would amount to.

Wid.

In those early times the Christian Assemblies drained and emptied the Roman Theatres, and the multitude thronged into the Church, as earnestly as now they crowd out; Coimus in coetum ut at Deum quasi manu factâ precationibus ambiamus orantes, said the fore-mentioned Tertullian. The confluence to the publick worship was in those daies so great, and the consent of heart and voice so universal, that St. Jerome said, The Hallelujahs of the Church was like the noise of many waters, and the Amen like Thunder; Heaven and Earth then answered each other in a glorious Antiphone, and made up one blessed Chorus! There was joy in Heaven, and peace on Earth: The Hymn sung by the Angels at our Saviours Nativity, was verified in those first Ages of his Religion, Glory to God on High, on Earth peace, and Good-will amongst men.

The

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The Holy men of those times that approached our Saviour, had as it were some Raies of his Divinity shed upon them, and their faces shone like Moses's, when he came down from the Holy Mount.

A Christian Church was a Colledge of holy and good men, and the Glory of God filled the place where they assembled; and Fire came down from Heaven too, but not to set the world in combustion, but to exhale and lift up the Odours of pious and devout Prayers.

But since those times Zeal hath decayed, as if it had not been the intrinsick Excellency of Religion, but the fires of Pagan Persecution that kindled that heat in the breasts of Christians; and the Church so divided and broken in pieces, as if it was not one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism that united them, but a common enemy. Dry Opinions have been taken for Faith, and Zeal of a Party hath gone for Holiness of Life; Men have been busie in making new Creeds, and have forgotten to practise the old one. And since the Empire hath been divided into East, and West, Churches have been at defiance, and as opposite to each other as those points are. In short, The once famous Greek Churches

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ches are now over-run with so squalid a Barbarism, that little but the Name of Christianity is left amongst them: And the Roman Church, whose Faith was famous and
Rom. 1. 8. *spoken of through all the world, is now as infamous for Usurpation, Superstition and Cruelty, and so deformed with Pagan Rites and mundane Policies, that Christianity is the least part of her.*

What shall we take to be the reason of this general Defection? Was it only Novelty and not its intrinsick Goodness and Reasonableness that commended this Religion to the world, that the longer it lasts, the less it signifies? Or are the Principles of Christianity effete (like the Causes of the Gentile Oracles, as Plutarch discourses) that all the motives of Virtue and Holiness have now so little influence upon mens tempers and lives? Or is it true that was said of old, Religio peperit divitias, & filia devoravit matrem, since Churches have been endowed, men have espoused only the Fortune, and not the Faith? Or is the true reason, that of old, Christianity was deeply rooted in the Hearts of men, and brought forth the fruits of good works in their Lives: whereas now it is only a barren notion in mens Heads, and is productive of nothing but leaves of Opinion
and

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and Profession? Then it was the employment of mens hearts in meditation, of their knees in devotion, of their hands in distribution and beneficence : now it is become the entertainment of mens ears in hearing novelty, of their tongues and lips in censuring and disputing.

But whatever the causes have been, such is the condition of Religion generally in the Greek and Latin Churches ; and I doubt if we come nearer home, we shall not find things much better.

This Island of Britain had the glory not only to be the native Countrey of Constantine the first Christian Emperour, but a far Greater, that under Lucius it received the Christian Faith first of any great Kingdom in the world. Britannorum loca, Romanis inaccessible, Christo verò subdita, saith Tertullian, The Cross made a more effectual as well as a more happy Conquest here, than all the Roman Powers could do. And this Northern Climate was not only thus early enlightned with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, but had life and warmth proportionably. An evidence whereof we have, in that we find British Bishops at the Council of Arles which was held before the Nicene : And at the
time

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time of the Nicene Council Britain was counted one of the Six Diocesses of the Western Empire. And for the Zeal of the British Christians, the Martyrdom of St. Albane, Amphibolus and others are great and glorious instances.

But to descend to lower times. The Inhabitants of this Island have not been more famous for Martial Prowess against their enemies, hospitality to strangers, and good nature towards all mankind, (which three things have been, and, I hope, are still their peculiar glories,) than for sincere piety and devotion. Polydore Virgil an Italian, and Erasmus a Dutchman, both of the Roman Communion, and competent witnesses, do affirm, That there was more true Devotion and sincerity of Religion in this Church and Kingdom of England, than in any one place of the world besides. What was said of Sparta, that *ibi senes sunt maxime senes*, might be applyed to this purpose, that here Christians were so the most heartily and truly of any people in the world. The Universal Pastor (as he would be called) I mean the Bishop of Rome, observed the Sheep of England to bear such good Eleeces, and so patiently to submit to the Shearer, that he kept a watchful eye over this Flock, and his vigilancy

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gilancy was rewarded with the Golden Pleece. He and his Emissaries found such large hearts and devout minds here, that we are inabled to understand the reason of their great concern for our going astray since, and their earnest and unwearied endeavours to reduce us back again to that fold. Yet what by being oftner shorn than fed, (and then not with the best Pastures neither,) what by the ill examples of others, (but especially of their Guides,) and what by length of time; corruption overspread this Church too: But then, as it happens in bodies of a strong and vivacious Constitution, when they chance by ill Diet or other accident, to be stuft with Crudities and bad humours, they Critically evacuate them by meer strength of Nature: So this Church gave certain proof that it had sana principia, and a true sense of the reality of Christianity, that one of the first in Christendom it returned to it self and a just temperament by a Reformation.

And the Reformation of this Church, which the Romanists for their own ends, so much detest, and some others unreasonably slight, was as much the Emulation of other Nations, as Glorious in it self. For,

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1. It was the most orderly and best becoming Christianity; it was not brought in with Tumult and Sedition, as most Changes are, but by Laws and the Supream Magistrate. There was no noise of Axes and Hammers in this Building, but the several parts of this Fabrick fell in together with a kind of Harmony, as the Jews say of the Temple of Salomon.

2. It was the most moderate and temperate, as being the result of Deliberation and Reason, not of blind Passion or an humour of Innovation. Our Reformers did not purge out the good, because formerly it had been abused (as the humour of some men is to do) but vindicated what was useful, from the abuse: They neither countenanced what was evil by the good was to be found, nor rejected the good for the casual adherence of evil. They did not abolish a venerable Order or Office in the Church for the ill manners of some that had born it; but took care to put better men in the rooms of such. They were not of opinion, that the Church could not arrive at primitive purity; unless it was reduced to primitive poverty; nor because they found some Ceremonies then used that were superstitious and dangerous, and thought

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too many were burdensome, therefore concluded all decency in the service of God was Popish. And in short, they did not depart farther from the Church of Rome by Reformation, than she had departed from the Truth and herself by degeneracy and corruption. By all which they demonstrated, that the change they made, was not for the sake of humour and faction, but necessity and publick good.

The Church of Rome reproaches us with the sinister ends of the Prince and several of those that sate at the helm of this great affair: But who knows not, that it is the usual method of Almighty God to bring about his own designs, and accomplish the greatest benefits to Mankind, by making the sinister intentions of men co-operate towards them? He made use of the unnatural cruelty of Joseph's Brethren towards him, to the preservation of the whole family of Jacob, sending Joseph into Ægypt as an Harbinger and Nurse to provide for them in a famine. And in respect hereof Joseph tells them, it was not they, but God sent him thither. The Cruelty of Pharaoh, who sought by severities to break and wear out the Israelites, harden'd them and prepared them for all the difficulties they were afterwards to encounter. The obstinacy and incredulity of the Jews,
proved

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Acts 8. 4. proved to be the riches of the Gentiles. The persecution of the Apostles at Jerusalem made way for the spreading of the Gospel into all other Countries. Instances of this kind are innumerable; or if they were not, yet were it very unsafe for those of the Church of Rome to make this objection, lest they provoke us to say what cannot be either denyed or justified by them, That the barbarous Tyrant and Usurper Phocas brought in the Universal Pastorship of the Bishop of Rome, and that the most bloody and rapacious Princes have ordinarily been the great Patrons and Indowers of their Church; thinking, it seems, to hallow their own Villanies, and legitimate their unjust acquisitions, by dividing the spoil with the Bishop and Church of Rome.

3. The English Reformation was the most compleat and perfect in its kind, as retaining the most antient Doctrine and soundest Confession of Faith, founded upon the holy Scriptures, and agreeable to the first General Councils, the most Primitive Church-Government, and a Liturgie the best accommodate to reconcile and unite mens Devotions: Such a Liturgie, as Mr. FOX the Author of the Martyrologie is not afraid to say was indited by the Holy Ghost; but certainly had a great testimony

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testimony in the unspeakable joy and contentment holy men took in it in King Edward the Sixths days, their zeal for the maintenance of it, longing for the restitution of it, and sealed it with their blood in Queen Maries days, and the universal triumphs and acclamations at the restoring of it in Queen Elizabeths Reign.

And admirable it is to consider how happy this Church and Nation then was; in what Glory and Majesty the Prince reigned, in what Peace and Concord the Subjects lived; but especially it is remarkable, how devout and pious an Age that was, as is scarce perhaps to be parallel'd since the time that Christianity flourish'd under Constantine the Great. What reverence was then yielded to the Ministers of Religion? What devotion to the publick worship? How general an acquiescence of hearts and minds in it?

which the greater it was, the more just is our wonder, and the more reasonable our inquiry, what should be the Cause that in the same Church, and amongst devout and honest-minded Englishmen, such a zeal should terminate in so cold an indifferency, as may now be observed; or rather that such

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ablest

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a blessed harmony should degenerate into so much discord, as is now too discernable amongst us.

We read Ezra 3. that when the second Temple at Jerusalem was building, the young men rejoiced at the reviving glory of their Nation and Religion, but the old men that had beheld the far greater splendour and more stately Majesty of the former Temple built by Solomon, they wept, as contemplating how far this came short of that: so that it was hard to say, whether the shouts of the young men or the lamentations of the elder were the more loud. And truly when we consider in how low a condition the Church of England was some few years since, till it had a happy Resurrection with the return of our Gracious Sovereign, will see cause to rejoyce and thank God that we are in no worse condition than we are; But he that understands and considers what was the felicity of the first Age of our Reformation, and compares it with the present condition of our affairs, will have just cause to lament the difference.

For in those dayes so venerable was the Society of the Church, that to be cast out of it

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it by Excommunication was as dreadful as to be thunder-smitten; that Sentence was like Proscription among the Romans, which they counted a Civil death, and dreaded as much as a Natural. But now it is become a matter of Ambition with some, and a piece of Glory; And to be cast out of the Church; is as good as Letters testimonial or recommendatory to other Assemblies.

There were few or none then that did not constantly frequent the Church; now the Church is become the Conventicle in many places, and the Conventicle the Church, in respect of the fulness and frequency of the one, and the unfrequentedness and destitution of the other.

Aristonicus came to a certain City in Greece where he observed many Temples, but few Men that would hear him. He therefore instead of the usual phrase ἀκούτε λαοί, cries out, ἀκούτε τοίχοι, Hear O ye Stone-walls, less hard than the hearts of men. The Application is too easie in our case.

In that time we speak of, the Liturgy and publick Prayers were counted a princi-

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pal part of Gods worship; now they are not only nothing without a Sermon, but in danger to desecrate the Sermon too by their conjunction. The Bible is scarce Canonical, if it have the Prayers bound up in the same Cover; and so extreamly offensive are they grown to some, that they will rather totally neglect the publick worship of God, and never receive the Communion whilest they live, than have to do with the Common Prayers.

Mr-Calv. Heretofore there were but few things scrupled in the establisht Religion, and those were very few that made use of any such pretence or scruple; but now it is become the great point of Sanctity to scruple every thing. There was one indeed, and he a great man, that said, there were tolerabiles ineptiæ in our Liturgy; and the most favourable return he met with, was, that he had his tolerabiles morositates. Now the title of ineptiæ is counted too mild an expression; whatever suits not the present humour, is either Jewish, Popish or Superstitious.

This Change is sadly lamentable, that good Laws should be thus trampled upon; the
best

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*best Church in the world thus despised, and
the best minded People thus abused.*

*Now my business is therefore in the first
place, to enquire from what Causes this hath
come to pass.*

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PART



PART I.

*An Enquiry into the Causes and Origin of
the Separation from and Contempt of
the English Reformed Church.*

CHAP. I.

*wherein are represented several things that
are pretended, but are not the true Causes
of our distractions and dissatisfactions ;
viz. 1. Corruption in Doctrine ; 2. The
too near approach of this Church to the
Roman ; 3. The Scandalousness of the
Clergie: All which are disproved.*



WE have a Proverbial saying
amongst us, that *Every one that
is forty years old, is either a
Fool or a Physician*: But with-
out a Proverb to justify the
undertaking, there are but few that (at

what age soever) do not think themselves at years of discretion enough, to pass a judgement upon, and prescribe to the Body Politick, whether Church or State. Though it usually happens, that such Empiricks, either to shew their wit (suspecting distempers where there are none) make them; or whilst they rashly adventure *quieta movere*, and like *Englismen* will be alwayes mending, they make work for better skill than their own; or lastly, if they discover some small matter amiss, mistaking the cause of it, not only lose their time and labour (which would be easily pardonable) but exhaust the spirits of the Patient with improper medicines, and purge out the good and useful juices as noxious humours, and so the Physician becomes far the greater disease of the two.

That our Church is of a sound and healthful constitution, and might have continued so, had it not met with this fortune, I think I have sufficiently, though briefly manifested in the foregoing Introduction: But some men either loving to be always reforming, or having first separated from it, that they may either commend their own skill, or justify their own fact, must accuse the Church.

We

We read of *Brutus*, that having killed *Cæsar*, he was alwaies after inveighing against him as a Tyrant, *Ità enim factò ejus expediebat*, saith the Historian, It was expedient he should call *Cæsar* Tyrant, for otherwise himself must be a notorious Traytor. So these men, though the greatest disorders of the Church be but what themselves have made, must find faults, that they may not seem to have raised all the dust, and withdrawn themselves and others from it without cause.

I. And in the first place the Doctrine of this Church is blamed; though thanks be to God, there are but few that are of so little discretion as to bring in this charge, and those that are, will never be able to prove it.

The main (if not the only) thing excepted against in this kind, is, that the thirty nine Articles are not so punctual in defining the five points debated at the Synod of *Dort* as they could wish. But this though it neither needs nor deserves an answer, yet I shall reply these two things to it.

First, That it is not so with the Doctrine of Christianity as with common Arts and Sci-

Sciences, which depend upon humane wit and invention, and consequently are capable of daily improvements : For the mind of man having not an intuitive knowledge, but proceeding by way of discourse, discovers one thing by another, and infers things from one another, so that there is not a *Nè plus ultra* in those things, but daily new discoveries, & *dies diem docet*. Whereto accords the saying of wise men, *Antiquitas sæculi, est juvenus mundi*; That which we call the old World, is but indeed the infancy of knowledge, and the latter Times must needs have as much the advantage of truth as they have of deliberation and experiment.

But it is quite otherwise with Christianity, for that depending solely upon Divine Revelation, can admit of no new discoveries; Time may obscure it, and the busie wit of man may perplex and confound it with its inventions, but can never discover any thing new, or bring to light any truth that was not so from the beginning. For if we admit of new Revelations, we lose the old and our Religion together, we accuse our Saviour and his Apostles as if they had not sufficiently revealed Gods mind to the world, and we incur St. Paul's *Anathema* which

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which he denounces against him (whosoever it shall be, nay, if an Angel from Heaven) that shall preach any other doctrine than what had been received. And St. *Jude* hath told us the Faith was *once*, that is either at once, or once for all, delivered to or by the Saints. But if we shall pretend a private Spirit or Revelation to discover and interpret what was before delivered, we do as bad; we suppose Christ and his Apostles not to be able to deliver the mind of God, and we open a Gap for all Impostures and delusions perpetually to infest and corrupt Christian Doctrine.

The consequence of these premises is, that (contrary to what I affirmed before of other Sciences) the elder any Doctrine of Christianity can be proved to be, it must needs be the truer, and accordingly deserve the greater veneration from us, as coming nearer the fountain of Evangelical Truth, Divine Revelation: and that he that talks of more clear Light of the latter times, and clearer discoveries in Religion, talks as foolishly as he that should affirm he could discern things better at a miles distance, than the man that hath as good eyes as himself, and yet stood close by the object.

This

This being so, it must needs be the excellency and great commendation of this Church, that her Articles of Doctrine agree better with the first Times of Christianity than the last Age; and is an irrefragable Argument that she derived it not from any Lake or lower streams troubled and mudded with mens passions and disputes, but from the Fountain of the holy Scripture, and from those who certainly had best advantage of understanding it in its own simplicity, the Primitive Church. That no one Father or Writer of the Church, whether Greek or Latin, before St. *Austin's* time agreed in Doctrine with the determination of the Synod of *Dort* is so notoriously plain that it needs no proof, nor can be denied. And if he (I mean St. *Austin*) agrees therewith, yet it is certain that in so doing he disagrees as much with himself as he doth with us of the Church of *England*. And what if St. *Austin*, a devout good man, (but whose Piety was far more commendable than his Reason,) being hard put to it by the *Manichees* on one hand, and the *Pelagians* on the other, was not able to extricate himself, who can help it? Shall his Opinion, and that which he was rather forced into by disputation than made choice of, but especially shall the Determination of

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of a few Divines at *Dort* vye with the constant Doctrine of the Primitive Church, or make that an imputation upon our Church, which is really among its Glories? Must a novel *Dutch Synod* prescribe Doctrine to the Church of *England*, and outweigh all Antiquity? Shall those that knew not how God could be just, unless he was cruel, nor great, unless he decreed to damn the greatest part of Mankind; that could not tell how man should be kept humble, unless they made him not a man but a stock or stone: Shall, I say, such Men and such Opinions confront the Antient Catholick Apostolick Faith, held forth in the Church of *England*?

Secondly, The Articles of the Doctrine of this Church do with such admirable prudence and wariness handle these points we are now speaking of, as if particular respect was had to these men, and care taken that they might *abundare suo sensu*, enjoy their own Judgements, and yet without check subscribe to these Articles. And accordingly it is well known, that not many years since, when the *Dort* Opinions were very predominant amongst many Divines of this Church, they used (it may be) a little more scholastic subtilty to reconcile their own Opinions with these Articles, but never condemned

demned the latter for the sake of the former.

And at this day divers good men are in the service of this Church that are in their private Judgements of the *Dort* perswasion, and yet never thought their subscription to these Articles did any violence to their Consciences or Judgements: therefore this can be no cause of our Troubles, nor ground of Separation from the Church.

A second pretence against this Church is, that it is not sufficiently purged from the dross of Popish Superstitions, that it comes too near the Church of *Rome*, and so the Communion of it is dangerous.

Popery is an odious Name in this Nation, and God be thanked that it is so, for it deserves no less: But as *Constantine* when he condemned the *Arrians* and decreed their Books should be burnt, appointed that they should be called *Porphyrians*, a Name sufficiently detested by the generality of Christians: So those men that have a mind to reproach the Church, know no more effectual way of affixing an Ignominy upon it, than by laying the imputation of Popery to it. And indeed if the Charge were as true as it is false, or if it were as probable as it is malicious,

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cious, it would not only serve to exasperate the Vulgar against the Church, but to justify their Secession from it. But it is hard to say whether the unreasonableness or the uncharitableness be greater in this suggestion. For,

1. It is certain there hath been little or no alteration made in either the Doctrine, Discipline or Liturgy since the first Reformation; and therefore if either of them incline too much that way, they did so from the beginning. Now that which I inquire into, is, what should be the causes of the late revolt and separation from this Church, or what should make that discernable change in mens affections towards it, from what was in the former Age? And he that tells me it was Popishly constituted at first, gives indeed a reason (if it was true) why this Reformation should not have been entertained at first, but doth not assign a cause why those should depart from it now, that had imbraced it with so much zeal formerly. He therefore that would speak home to this case, must shew that this Church hath *lost its first love*, and hath warped towards the old corruptions from which it was once purged. But this is so far from being possible to be shewn, that it is certain on the contrary, that all the change that hath been made of late years, hath

hath been meerly in compliance with and condescension to those that object this against it; and a man would reasonably expect, they would easily pardon such Innovations.

But in truth the main quarrel is, that we are not alwaies reforming, but keep to the old Matron-like Dress, the Queen *Elizabeth* fashion. If the Governours of the Church would comply with the curiosity of this wanton Age, our Religion would quickly have the fortune of *Apelles's* picture according to the known story. He to deride the conceited folly of the Age, exposes to publick view a Master-piece of his work: And as it usually happens, that every body pretends to skill in reforming (by the encouragement of the Proverb that saith, *facile est inventis addere*) scarcely any person that pass by, but spent their verdict upon the picture; All commend it in the general, yet to give some special instance of their skill, every one finds some fault or other: One would have had more Shadow; another less; one commends the Eye, but blames a Lip, &c. The subtil Artist observes all, and still as any passenger had shot his bolt, alters the picture accordingly. The result was, that at last by so many Reformations it became so deformed and monstrous a piece, that not only

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only wiser men, but these vulgar Reformers themselves wondred at it; and could now discern nothing worthy so famed an Artist. He on the other hand, to right himself, produces another Piece of the same Beauty and Art, which he had hitherto kept up by him, and had escaped their censure, and upbraids them thus, *Hanc ego feci, istam populus*, This latter is my work, the other is a monster of your own making.

This is our case; Christian Religion was by holy and wise men our Reformers, divested of those gaudy and meretricious accoutrements the *Romanists* had drest her up in, and habited according to primitive simplicity; but this would not please every body, every Sect and Party would have something or other added or altered according to their several phancies and Hypotheses, which if it should be allowed (the opinions of men are so contrary one to another as well as to truth) the true lineaments of Christianity would quite be lost. Upon this consideration hath not this Church been very fond of alterations.

But to all this it is likely it will be replied, That now we have more light and discover blemishes and deformities, which (though
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they were before, yet) we could not discern when our selves came out of the dark Den of Popery. At first like the man under cure of his blindness, *Mark 8. 24.* we saw men as trees walking, we discovered only some more palpable errors, but now we discern though lesser yet not tolerable deformities.

2. To this therefore I answer in the second place, That it is certain all is not to be esteemed Popery, that is held or practised by the Church of *Rome*, and it cannot be our duty (as I have said before) to depart further from her than she hath departed from the truth: for then it would be our duty to forsake Christianity it self in detestation of Popery. To reform is not surely to cast away every thing that was in use before, unless Barbarism be the only through Reformation.

The Historian observes of those that spoil Provinces and ransack Kingdoms, *ubi solitudinem fecere pacem appellant*, when they had converted a flourishing Country into a desolate Wilderness, they called this a profound peace. But sure to reform is not to destroy and lay waste, but to amend. Unless therefore it can be proved against the Church of *England* that she holds or practises any thing false or sinful, it will little avail them that ob-

object against her, and as little be any blemish to her constitution, that in some things she concurs with the *Roman*. Nor is it reasonable to say, such a thing is received from the Church of *Rome*, meerly because there it is to be found, unless it be to be found nowhere else: for though it be true that many things are the same in both Churches, (in as much as it is impossible they should be Churches of Christ at all else,) yet it is as true that those things wherein they agree are such (and no other) as were received generally by all Christian Churches, and by the *Roman* before it lay under any ill character. But that this Church doth not so syncretize with that of *Rome*, as to make its Communion unsafe or sinful, I suppose the following Considerations will give sufficient security to an unprejudiced mind. In the mean time let me intreat him that hath entertained any suspicions of that kind against her, to give an ingenuous Answer of these two or three Queries.

1. If there be such a dangerous affinity betwixt the Church of *England* and the *Romish*, how came it to pass that the blessed instruments of our Reformation, such as A. Bishop *Cranmer*, *Ridley*, *Latimer*, and others, laid down their lives in testimony to this against that? For if those of the Church of

Rome could have been so barbarous as cruelly to murder those excellent persons for some slight Innovations, or for differing from them in Circumstantials; yet certainly such wise and good men would not have been so prodigal of their own blood, nor weary of their lives as to cast them away upon Trifles. It is probable at least therefore that those of the Church of *Rome* thought the *English* Reformation to be essentially different from them; and it is more than probable that those holy men aforesaid thought so, and did not offer to God the sacrifice of fools.

2. Or how comes it to pass that all those of the *Roman* Communion withdraw themselves from ours, and are commanded so to do by the Head of their Church under peril of damnation? And on the other side the true Protestants of the Church of *England*, think it their duty to absent themselves from the *Roman* Worship, lest they should defile their Consciences with their Superstitions? I say how comes this distance and apprehension of sin and danger reciprocally, if the differences between them be inconsiderable?

3. Whence comes it to pass, that the *Bigots* of the *Romish* Church have more spite against our Church, than against any Sect or Party

Party whatsoever? but that they take us not only for Enemies, but the most mortal and formidable of all those they have to do with.

Or Lastly, if both the Church and Churchmen of *England* are not far enough removed from any participation with that of *Rome*, how comes it to pass that they of all men most zealously and constantly upon all occasions stand in the gap and oppose the return of Popery into *England*, when other men either slight the danger, or are so fond of their own private sentiments, as apparently to run the hazard of this for the sake of them? Any reasonable man would think those men have not really such an abhorrence of Popery as they pretend, and that there might easily be found terms of accommodation between them, when he shall observe them more fond of every petty Opinion, than concerned for the publick Security against that common Enemy; and that they will rather venture the danger of that breaking in upon them, than forgo the least fancy or opinion; nay, will be instrumental in procuring a Toleration and suspension of the publick Laws for that, which they are so jealous others should have any kindness for. And for proof of this, I call to witness the transactions of the last year, when those very men that would be

thought the *Atlas's* and only supporters of Protestant Religion, and would give out as if their Zeal was the only Bulwark against Popery, had by their separation from, and enmity to this Church, weakned the common interest, and by their restless importunities and unlimited desires of liberty, in a manner extorted a suspension of the Laws touching Religion. Had not His Majesty and His Parliament timely foreseen the consequence, and the whole Nation been awakened into an apprehension of the danger by the serious and constant admonitions of the Episcopal Clergy, Popery might have come in like a Landflood upon us, notwithstanding those quicksighted Watchmen that can spy Popery so far off. I say, had not the *Church-men* especially bestirred themselves, and shewed both a better courage and zeal against Popery, and also a better skill in that warfare than their Accusers, the so much dreaded Enemy had ere this time been in fair hopes of attaining his desires.

This was a passage of so much glory to the true Church-men, and so great and illustrious an instance of their integrity, that I am in hope whilst it shall remain in memory, Malice it self will be ashamed to lay any imputation of inclining to Popery either upon

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on the Church or Church-men of *England*.

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I shall not need to add to all this, That there are as understanding men in Religion, persons of as holy Lives, and of as comfortable Consciences of this Churches Education, as are any where to be found in the world besides. Which three things together fully acquit any Church of participation with Popery. For that degeneracy of Christianity is for nothing more truly hateful, nor by any thing more discoverable than by its blind devotion, principles of immorality, and the bad security it gives to the Consciences of men; which who so acquits any Church of, (as every considerate man must needs do this Church) he shall after that, very unreasonably leave any ill character upon her, at least of that nature we now are speaking of.

3. But there is a terrible Charge yet to come, and that is against the Sufficiency, but especially the Sanctity of the Clergy and Ministry of the Church of *England*; as if they, like the Sons of *Eli*, 1 Sam. 2. 15. *made men to abhor the offerings of the Lord*. And this is made the pretence of resorting to Conventicles, and forsaking the Church.

Now if this was as true as it is horribly

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false, it might be an Objection perhaps fit for a *Papist* to make, who is taught that the efficacy of all Divine Offices depends upon the intention and condition of him that administers; But no *Protestant* without contradicting his own principles can make use of it to justify his recession from the Church: For if the efficacy of all Divine Ordinances depend upon the Divine Institution and the concurrence of Gods Grace with my use of them, what can it prejudice me, that he that administers is an evil or unlearned man, so long as I prepare my self to receive benefit immediately from God in the use of the means appointed by him? This therefore may serve for a malicious stone to cast at us from whom they are departed; but no argument in the cause, nor excuse for themselves.

Yet I confess nevertheless, this way of arguing (for we must be forced to call hard words by that name) is of great prevalence with injudicious persons, and able to prejudice them against the best Constitutions in the world. For they, not understanding the reason of things, give reception and entertainment to any proposition, in proportion to the opinion or reverence they have for the person that recommends it. It is a known story, how well the *Spartans* were aware of this;

this; and therefore if in their Council, a man of a bad life had propounded excellent counsel, they would not suffer him, but suborn some other person of great sanctity to be the Author of it: Amongst other reasons lest the ill opinion that was generally conceived of the person, should derogate from the weight and value of the counsel and advice.

Therefore the more extreamly to blame are those that acknowledging the truth and excellency of the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, can yet find in their hearts to undermine the success of it by sowing suspicions and in raising scandals against them, that are to propagate it.

It will be to the immortal glory of the Great *Constantine*, that when at the *Nicene* Council the Bishops and Clergy had exhibited to him a great bundle of Libels one against another, he burnt them all together before their faces, as thinking them fitter for the *fire*, than the *light*. And protested he had so great a zeal for the reputation of Church-men, and such a sense of the concern and consequence of their good fame and reputation, that if he should see one of them in the most scandalous commission, he would
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cover such a mans shame with his own Purple.

But as I doubt in these days there is little of the Spirit and Charity of *Constantine*, so thanks be to God, there is little need of it in this case; for I doubt not to convince this suggestion against the *Church-men*, of as much fallshood, as the former against the *Church* of frivolousness. For though there want not those in these days that are so quick-sighted as to discover spots in the Sun it self: Though I say, there be both those that have great skill in all the methods of uncharitableness, such as can insinuate little whispers and jealousies first, and then foment and hatch them up to a story, and then aggravate the fact, and lastly make the folly of some one man, be the scandal of the whole Order; And also those Atheistical persons whose interest it is (in order to the extenuating their own villanies,) as much as may be to render the persons of those that reprove them as ridiculous as they can, and to that purpose are become great proficientes of late in a scurrilous kind of drollery, whereby they can sublimate their own vices and debaucheries into a kind of vapour, a meer frolick and Gentile humour, and on the other side aggravate the meer humane infirmities of

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graver men into great deformities : yet all their combined wit and malice will never be able to affix any scandal upon the Body of the present *English* Clergy.

1. For their Learning and Ability : If the Preaching of the present Age be not better than that of former, I would fain know the reason why the Homilies (which generally are nothing but a collection of such Sermons as were of most reputation about the first times of our Reformation) are in no greater reputation , and should expect to see the people desire their Pastors to read them in the Congregation, and save the labour of their own compositions.

If the Sermons of foreign Divines be better than those of the *English* , what is then the reason that all Protestants abroad admire the *English* way of Preaching, in so much that some foreign Congregations (as I am credibly informed) defray the charges of the travails of their Pastors into *England*, as well as dispense with their absence, that they may return to them instructed in the method of *English* Preaching?

Whether the Preaching in the Church of *Rome* be to be preferred before ours, he that hath

hath not a mind to travail into those parts, may yet sufficiently well resolve himself, if he take but the pains to read a Book written by *Erasmus* of the Art of Preaching: which whosoever hath done or shall do, I verily perswade my self, he shall quickly be able to reckon up more follies and ridiculous passages in Popish Sermons, than all those gathered together by the Author of the *Inquiry into the Causes of the Contempt of the Clergy*.

Lastly, He that shall take the pains, or have the curiosity to compare the Preachings generally in our *Churches* with those ordinarily in the *Conventicles*, will either find them very unequally matcht, or else (if he hath any reason at all,) he hath reason to suspect himself intolerably prejudicate. For on the one side, he shall find sound Theology, strength of Argument, gravity of Expression and distinctness of Method; on the other side nothing more frequent than puerile and flat, oft-times rude, and sometimes blasphemous expressions, Similitudes instead of Arguments, and either apish Gestures, or tragical Vociferations instead of Eloquence.

Besides, a wise man may in great measure take an estimate of the wisdom and abilities of a Preacher or Writer by the very subject
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he chooses to discourse on, and not only by the manner of handling it. And he that shall impartially apply himself to this little trouble, may easily observe the Sermons and Tractates of the Non-conformists generally, to be either about *Predestination*, which (besides the danger of it amongst the people for mistakes) nothing but unskilfulness could make any man confident enough to undertake the unfolding of; or about *Union with God and Christ*, which themselves confess to be unintelligible, and they help to make it so; or the *sweetness, beauty and loveliness* of Christ's *Person*, which is seldom handled with any better effect, than the stirring up some sensual passion or other in the fond Auditors, as I have seen verified by experience.

God forbid that I should charge all the Non-conformists with such indecencies as these; but it is manifest it is such kind of discourses as I have intimated, that are the most taking and ravishing amongst them.

But then on the other side, you shall hear Discourses of the *Nature and Attributes* of God, and the *reason of Religion* deduced thence; of the *Divin. Providence*, and Arguments of *Contentment, Reverence, and Submission*

mission inferred therefrom ; of the *Eternal* reasons of Good and Evil, and *indispensable* obligations to *Vertue*, as the consequence of that principle laid upon the consciences of men ; of the *nature of Faith*, the *necessity of Holiness*, of *Charity*, of *Obedience to Governours* : all which are good and profitable, and of great weight and importance.

If we now compare the *writings* of both parties, the difference will yet be more legible. Although it hath been observed of old by a Wise and Great man, That generally the ablest of men have not been most given to writing of Books, as being loth to make themselves Themes for fools to comment upon ; but a middle sort of men are most disposed, and usually have best success that way, whose Genius is more adequate to vulgar capacities : yet let any man of competent judgement lay passion and prejudice aside, and say, if the Writings of the Divines of this Church, both in the Controversies of Religion and most other parts of Learning, have not matcht any other Profession, any other Church, but extreamly overmatcht their Opponents ? It were easie to name Men and Writings, but I conceive it needless in so clear a case.

2. But then for the Lives of Church-men; Though I will not render evil for evil, nor retaliate the reproaches cast upon the Sons of the Church; by ripping up the miscarriages of the other persuasions: For (besides that I have not so learned Christ,) I have observed so much of the world, that such uncharitable recriminations have not only made an Apology for the Atheism and Profaneness of the Age, but afford a pleasant spectacle to all evil men, to behold Divines coming upon the Stage like Gladiators, and wounding and murdering one anothers reputation. To which add, that I verily hope the Lives, of the *generality*, at least, of the Clergy of *England* are so unblameable and commendable in themselves, that they need not the foil of other mens deformities to set them off or recommend them. Yet I will say these two things further in the case.

1. If a man be a male-content with the Government, and forsaking the Church resort to private Assemblies, or if being a Clergy-man and continuing in the Church, he shall debauch his Office and undermine the Church which he should uphold; such a man may then debauch his Life too, and yet have a very charitable construction amongst the

the generality of dissenters. And on the other side, if a man be of singular sanctity and the most holy conversation, but without zealous of the interest of the Church and his own duty in it, this man shall have worse quarter and be more maligned by the fiery Zealots of other parties, than one that is both of a more loose life and meaner abilities. Whence it plainly appears, that the bad lives of Clergy-men (if it were true) is but a pretext, not the true cause of quarrel with the Church.

2. If impertinent and phantastical talking of Religion be Religion, if endless scrupulosity and straining at Gnats, if censoriousness and rash judging our Betters and Superiours, if melancholy sighing and complaining be true Christianity, if going from Sermon to Sermon, without allowing our selves time to meditate on what we hear, or leisure to instruct our Families; if these, and such as these, are the main points of true Godliness, then I must confess, the Sons of the Church of *England* are not generally the most holy men, and the Non-conformists are. But if a reverent sense of God, and Conscience of keeping all his expresse Laws, if Justice, Mercy, Contentment, Humility, Patience, Peaceableness

ness and Obedience to Governours, be the principal ingredients of a good life; as doubtless they are, if we take our measures either from our Saviour, the Apostles or Prophets: Then I do not despair but the Church-men may be good Christians, and of far more holy lives than their accusers, notwithstanding all the contempt cast upon them. For upon this Issue I dare challenge Malice it self to be able to fasten any brand of bad life upon the generality or body of the Clergy.

I know this Age is not without some of the brood of *Cham*, who will take the impudence to uncover their Fathers nakedness, and expose those deformities, which they ought, not only out of charity or reverence, but wisdom also to conceal. And it is not to be expected that such a body of men, made of the same flesh and blood, and solicited with the same temptations with other men, should be altogether without spot or blemish: yet I do really believe, those are extream few of that number that justly deserve any scandalous character, and also very inconsiderable in respect of the whole. And he that shall for the miscarriages of a few, reflect dishonour upon the Clergy in general, shall do as unrighteously,

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ly, as he that shall take a downright honest man, and omitting his many and great vertues and innumerable good actions, only rake up and represent in an odious Catalogue all the follies of his youth and errors of his life. By the which artifice, the best man in the world, much more the best Society of men may be rendred odious enough. It is well enough known, that the healthfullest body is not without some humours, which if they were all drawn together, into some one part or member, would make an ill and dangerous spectacle: but whilest they lye dispersed in the whole mass of blood, where there is a vast predominancy of the good, or else are lockt up in their private cells, *glandulae* or other receptacles, till they shall be critically evacuated, do in the mean time, little or nothing indanger or deform such a body. I need not apply this to the case in hand. To conclude therefore; Were there but either so much Charity and Humanity as ought to be in Men and Christians, or so much unprejudicacy as becomes wise and good men, used in this matter; we should instead of reproaching the failings or miscarriages of a few, heartily thank God for that remarkable Holiness, Humility and Charity that is yet alive and warm in the
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breasts of so many of the Divines of this Church in this cold and degenerate Age. And for the rest we should think of that saying of Tacitus, *Vitia erunt donec homines, sed neque hac continua, & meliorum interventu pensantur.* There will be Faults whilest there are men in this world; but so long as they are not constant or general, at least whilest there is a prevalence of sincere vertue, Those men use as little Wisdom for themselves as Charity for their Neighbours, that in such a case asperse either the Age or the Church they live in; for in all reason he should only *cast the first stone that is himself without fault.*

CHAP. II.

Of the more remote and less observed Causes of the infelicity of this Church ; such as
1. *The Reign of Queen Mary and return of Popery under her in the Infancy of the Reformation.* 2. *The bad provision for Ministers in Corporations, &c.* 3. *Frequent wars.* 4. *The liberty in Religion that Trade seems to require.* 5. *The secret designs of Atheists and Papists.*

Hitherto I have only noted and refuted the Scandals and Contumelies cast upon this Church, which how groundless and unreasonable soever they are ; yet do not a little mischief when they are whispered in corners, and insinuated in Conventicles.

I might have reckoned up some more of the same nature, and as easily have disproved them ; but they are either reducible to those we have touched, or will fall under consideration in due time.

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I now proceed from those Imaginary, to inquire into and consider of the true and real Causes of the present disaffection to the *English* Reformation, and they will be found to be of several kinds; but I will not trouble my self curiously to distinguish them into exact Classes, contenting my self faithfully to relate them, and represent their peculiar malignant influences. And in this Chapter I will bring into view these five following.

1. It was the *misfortune*, and is the great disadvantage of this Church, that it was not well confirmed and swaddled in its Infancy. It is the observation of wise men, that it greatly contributes to the duration and longevity of any Society, to have a good time of Peace in its Minority, and not to have been put upon difficulties and tryals till its limbs and joynts were settled and confirmed, that is, till the people were competently inured to the Laws, and the Constitutions by time digested into Customs and made natural to them. The State of *Sparta* remained intire without any considerable change in its Constitution or Laws, the longest of any Society we have read of: And *Licurgus* the Law-giver and Founder of that Commonwealth, is thought to have taken an effectual

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course to make it so durable by this stratagem. When he had framed the body of their Laws, he pretends occasion of Travail to consult the Oracle at *Delphos* about their affairs, but first takes an Oath of all the *Lacedemonians* to preserve the Laws in being inviolable till his return. Which having done, he resolvedly never returns to them again. By this means whilst the people were by the Religion of their Oath and a long expectation of his delayed return, for a long time used to the Constitutions he had established, they grew so well practised in them, that at last Custom had habituated and even naturalized them to them, that they became unchangeable. Agreeable hereunto is the observation of our own Lawyers, that the Common Law, as they call it, is never grievous to the people, and seldom repealed, whatever defects are in it, as Statute-Laws frequently are; because long Custom and Use hath fitted either that to the men or the men to it, that all things run easily and naturally that way. It is observed also by Divines, That when God Almighty gave a peculiar Body of Laws to the people of *Israel*, he took not only the opportunity of their straits and adversities at their coming out of *Egypt*, that his Institutions might the more easily be received; but also kept them

*V. Philon.
Jud. de vi-
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them forty years under the continual education in and exercise of those Laws, and that in the Wilderness, where they were not likely to take in any other impressions, nor have other examples before their eyes to tempt or corrupt them. And besides all this, in a wonderful providence he so ordered it, that all those men that came out of *Agypt* (except *Caleb* and *Joshua*) and had observed other Customs and Laws, and so might be likely to give beginning to innovation, should all die before they came into the Land of *Canaan*. That by all these means, the Laws he gave them might take the deeper root, and so remain unalterable to all generations.

I cannot choose but observe one thing more to this purpose, That when our Blessed Saviour had by himself and his Apostles planted his Religion in the World, though it was such a Law as sufficiently recommended it self to the minds of men by its own goodness, easiness and reasonableness, and therefore was likely to be an *everlasting Religion*, (or Righteousness) as the Prophet *Daniel* calls it; yet for more security, it pleased the Divine providence to restrain the rage of Pagans and Jews for a good while, and to give the Christians above sixty years of peace, before any considerable persecu-

tion broke in upon them; that in that warm Sun it might spread its roots, and get some considerable strength and footing in the world.

But it was the will of God, that the strength of this new-born Church of *England* should be early tryed. And that it might give proof of its divine extraction, it must, like *Hercules*, conflict with Serpents in its cradle, and undergo a severe persecution, the good King *Edward* the sixth dying immaturrely, and Queen *Mary* succeeding him in the Throne.

By which means it came to pass, that as this Infant-Reformation gave egregious proof of its intrinsic truth and reasonableness, many sealing it with their blood; so it had this disadvantage (that we are all this while representing) namely, that by reason of this persecution a great number of the Ministers and other members of this Church, were driven into other Countreys for refuge and shelter from the storm; and there, were (as it's easie to imagine) tempted with novelty, and distracted with variety of Rites and Customs, before they were well instructed in the reasons, or habituated to the practice of their own. And hereupon (as it is usually

ally observed of *English* Travellers) brought home with them those foreign fashions, the fond singularity of which is still very taking with too many to this day.

I say, thus it came to pass, that those that went out from us, returned not again to us when they did return, in regard that before they were well inured to the *English* Reformation, they became enamoured of the Rites of other Churches, not much considering whether they were better, so long as they were fresher and newer, nor minding that there are oft-times reasons that make one Form necessary to be established in one place or people, and not in another, when otherwise it is possible they may be both indifferent in themselves, but not equally fit to the humour and custom of the people, or consonant to the Civil Constitutions; nor yet observing that many things were taken up and brought into use in other Churches not upon choice but necessity, not because they were absolutely better in themselves, but the state of affairs so requiring. As for instance; where the Reformation had not at first the countenance of the Civil Government, there the Reformers were constrained to enter into particular confederations with one another; from whence Presbyterian Government seems

to have taken its rise. I say these Exiled *English* Protestants not entring into so deep a search into the special causes or occasions of those different Rites and Forms they found in the places whither they fled for succour, as to discover whether they were strictly Religious or meerly Political: but observing some pretexts of Scripture to be made for them, and in process of time, during their abode in those parts being used to them, and by use confirmed in them; they at last, when they might with safety return to *England* again, came home laden with these foreign Commodities, and crying them up with a good grace, found too many Chapmen for such Novelties. Thus as the Children of *Israel*, even then when they had Bread from Heaven, Angels food, longed for the Onions and Garlick of *Egypt*, remembring how sweet those were to them under their bitter bondage, and had upon all occasions, and upon every pet or disgust, a mind to return thither: So these men retained as long as they lived a lingring after those entertainments which they found then very pleasant when other was denyed them; and so much the more in that, as I said before, they received a tincture of these before they had well imbibed or sufficiently understood the reasons of the Church of *England*.

And

And though these men are now dead, yet the Childrens Teeth are still set on edge with the sowre Grapes their Fathers have eaten. For those persons being considerable for their Zeal against Popery, and very much recommended to the esteem of people at their return, by the travail and hardship they had underwent for the Protestant profession, were easily able with great advantage to communicate their Sentiments and propagate their Prejudices amongst the Members of this Church. Here therefore I think we may justly lay the first Scene of the Distractions of this Church.

2. A second Cause of the ill state of the Church may be reckoned the bad and incompetent provision for a Learned and Able Ministry in the Corporations and generality of great Parishes in *England*.

It is easie to observe, that the multitudes of Opinions that deform and trouble this Church, are generally hatcht and nursed up in the Corporations, Market-Towns, and other great places; whereas the lesser Country Villages are for the most part quier, and peaceably comply with Establish't Orders. And if I should say, that not only the Dissatisfaction with the Rites and Government
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of the Church, but also the Convulsions and Confusions of State, took their Origin from the bad humours of those greater Societies or Congregations of people, I suppose I should say no more than what the observation of every considerative man will allow and confirm.

Now he that searching for a reason of this difference shall impute it either to the Ease, Fulness and Luxury of the former, whereby they have leisure and curiosity to excogitate Novelties, and spirit and confidence to maintain and abett them, whilst the latter tired with hard labour, neither trouble themselves nor others, but apply themselves to till the ground, and earn their bread with the sweat of their brows: or to the multitude and great concourse of people in the former, amongst whom Notions are more easily started, better protected, and Parties sooner formed for the defence and dissemination of them. He, I say, that discourses thus, gives a true account for so much, but searches not far enough to the bottom. For had there been an able learned Orthodox Clergy settled in such places, they by their wisdom and vigilance, would in a great measure have obviated all beginnings of these disorders; partly by principling the minds of men with sound
Doctrine,

Doctrine, partly convincing Gain-sayers, and especially rendring the Government of the Church lovely and venerable by their wise deportment.

In order therefore hereunto, there ought to have been the most liberal Maintenance and ingenuous Encouragement settled upon such important places. That where the work was greatest, and the importance most considerable, the motives to undertake it might be so too. To the intent that the most able and judicious Clergy-men might have been invited to, and settled upon those places that most needed them. But contrariwise it is most visible, that in those places where most Skill is to be exercised and most Labour to be undertaken, there is little Revenue to encourage the Workman.

In a little obscure Parish or Country Village often-times there is a well endowed Church, but in these great ones, generally, where the Flock is great, the Fleece is shorn to the Shepherds hands, and so pitiful a pittance left to the Curate or Minister, that he can scarce afford himself Books to study, nor perhaps Bread to eat, without too servile a dependance upon the Benevolence of his richer Neighbours; by which means either
his

his Spirit is broken with Adversity, or the Dignity of his Office obscured in the mean-ness of his condition, or his Influence and Authority evacuated, having neither where-with to live charitably nor hospitably; or all these together: nay, it is well, if, to help himself under these Pressures, he is not tempted to a sordid Connivance at, or Com-pliance with all those Follies and Irregula-rities he should correct and remedy. And so like *Esau, sell his Birthright* (the Dignity of the Priesthood) *for a mess of Pottage.*

Now how this comes to pass, that the greatest Cures have generally the least Main-tenance, is easily found; for it is well enough known that in those times when the Popes had a Paramount power in *England*, a great part of the Tythes and Revenues of Churches were by their extravagant Authority raviſht from them, and applyed to the Abbies and Monasteries, and this like an Oſtraciſme fell commonly upon the greatest Parishes, as having the best Revenues (and consequently the more desirable Booty to those hungry Caterpillers) and so the Issue was, that the richest Churches were made the poorest, in many such places little more than the Per-quisites and *Easter-Offerings* being left to those that shall discharge the Cure.

And

And though afterwards these superstitious Societies were dissolved, yet the Tythes being not thought fit to be restored to their respective Churches, the consequence is, that those places which ought for the good both of Church and State to be well provided for, are too often supplied by the most inconsiderable Clergy-men, or those men made so by the places they supply. My meaning is, that by reason of the incompetent Legal Maintenance provided for such Ministers, the people have it in their power either to corrupt an easie and necessitous man, or to starve out a worthy and inflexible one; and so whatever the humour of the place shall be, it is uncontrollable and incurable.

To remedy these inconveniencies, it hath of late pleased His Majesty and the Parliament, to make some provision so far as concerns the City of *London*, and it is hoped the same wisdom will in time take like care of other great places in the same condition; for till some such course be taken, it will be in vain to expect that the Church of *England* or the best Laws of Religion that can be devised, should either obtain just Veneration or due Effect.

3. I account the late Wars another Cause of the bad estate of the Church and Religion amongst us. Which may perhaps seem the more strange, since when men put their Lives most in danger, one would think they should then take the most care to put their souls out of danger. Besides it hath been the wisdom of most Nations to desire the countenance and encouragement of Religion in all their Martial undertakings. The *Romans* made great scruple of enterprizing any thing of that nature, till either their Priests (from inspection of the Sacrifice) or some other of their Pagan Oracles had given them the signal. And the *Turkish Musty* or High-Priest must give the *Prime Visier* his blessing before he enters upon the business. Whether it be that men indeed believe God Almighty to be the *Lord of Hosts*, and to give Victory to those that stand best approved with him; or whether it be only that they apprehend that the opinion of being under Gods favour, gives reputation to their Arms; inspires their men with valour and resolution, and disheartens their enemies; or upon whatever consideration: it is certain the matter of Fact is true, and that Religion is of great efficacy in Warlike exploits.

It may, I say, therefore seem the more strange, that War should be injurious to that which it seeks to for countenance and encouragement. But most strange of all, that Enemies abroad should make men quarrel with their Friends at home; that Iron and Steel, Wounds and Blows should make men tender-conscienced; that those who can find in their hearts to shed the blood of Men, of Christians, and of their Brethren without remorse, should be so queasie stomached as to scruple every punctilio and nicety in Ecclesiastick matters. And yet he that narrowly considers the rise and progress of our Disorders, will find that the distractions of the Church have kept pace with those of the State; and as before the War our Religious disputes and dissensions were but few to what they came to afterwards, so by every War, they have sensibly increased and grown upon us. For the proof of which I will desire the Reader to look no further back than to either of the Wars between this *Kingdom* and the *States* of the *Low Countreys*; and if he do not observe the contempt of Religion to be greater, and the state of the *Church* worse at the end of each of them than at the beginning, I will confess my self too severe an Interpreter of the effects of War. How

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War

War should so much debauch the Spirit of a Nation is not my business to enquire; yet these four things following seem to give some light into it.

1. There are certain Doctrines and Opinions found to be very useful in War, and to animate men in Encounters, that are utterly contrary both to Truth and Peace. Such as that of the Fatal Necessity of all things, which in the natural consequence of it is destructive of all Virtue. Yet however, the *Turks* find it of great consequence in their Wars, and it serves to animate their *Janizaries* to run desperately upon the very mouths of Canons. And this same persuasion, or one very like it, was highly cryed up and found serviceable to all bad purposes of our late Civil Wars.

2. Those that have occasion to use mens Courage, are forced to be content to wink at their Debaucheries, for fear they should emasculate the spirits of those they imploy, and turn the edge of their mettle. So Drunkenness, Whoring, Swearing and Blasphemy ordinarily pass under a very easie Censure amongst Souldiers. Men whose hearts are eagerly set upon a War are apt to permit those whose hearts and hands they use it, to be afraid

afraid of nothing, that so they may be fearless of the Enemy. And when the War is over, these Extravagancies are not laid down with their Arms : For when Lewdness hath gotten a habit, and mens Foreheads are brazen in their wickedness, they will not receive a check from disarmed Religion ; but rather harden themselves against it, and account that their Enemy which they are sure will not give Countenance to the Vices they are now settled in. In short ; War lets loose the Reins and encourages men to sin ; And when the War is over, these men are turned over to the Church for cure of their Souls, as to the Hospital for their bodily wounds. But no man will wonder if these men have no great kindness to the Church which forbids them the liberty and pleasure the Camp allowed them ; especially if it also prescribe them a severe course, and make their Consciences smart for the sins they have formerly practised with pleasure, and have yet a mind to.

3. War hath its peculiar Laws different vastly from those of the Church and of every well ordered Common-wealth too. The hazards and necessities of War make many things lawful there, that are otherwise abominable ; as to make no difference betwixt

things Sacred and Prophane, to pull down Churches, and do other such horrid things as nothing but War can palliate. And from hence it is too ordinary for men to be led on by Custome so as in time they forget the Differences of things altogether; and the Church and the Stable, the Priest and the Peasant are all one to them.

4. The meer disuse of Religion and its Offices antiquates the obligations of it with many. When men have long heard the noise of Drums and Trumpets, they are deaf to the still voice of the Gospel; and after long conversation with Iron and Steel, the Weapons of the Spiritual Warfare are of no force with them. Then, instead of Prayer men learn to curse and swear, and by disuse of Religion grow to forget it and slight it; and from not going to Church for a time (upon necessity) grow to plead a priviledge not to come at it at all.

Since then the Sword doth so much prejudice to the Gown, and the Camp to the Church, it is no wonder when we have been so often ingaged of late in the one, that the other hath been and is in no better condition.

4. I would in the next place, might I do it without

without offence, take the boldness to say, that the vast increafe of Trade doth usually reflect some inconvenience upon Ecclesiastical affairs. I mean no hurt either to any mens Persons or Interest, I envy no mens Prosperity and Wealth; It is far from my thoughts to wish the Tide of Trade dammed up: for I confess it is hugely advantageous to the publick, as well as to private persons in many respects. It much raises the parts and sharpens the wits of a Nation by foreign conversation, to which some apply that passage of the Prophet *Daniel*, Chap. 12. 4. *Many shall pass to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

It opens a passage to the discovery of other Countreys, and of the works of God and Man, of Nature and of Art.

It is the great Incentive and the great Instrument of humane Society; it makes all Mankind of one body, and by mutual intercourse to serve the occasions, supply the needs, and minister to the delight and entertainment one of another.

It enlarges the Minds of men as well as their Fortunes; insomuch that any Nation is unpolite, unbred, and half barbarous without it.

It inures men to hardship and danger, and instructs them in subtilty and all the Arts of living, and self security.

It adds much to the beauty, power and strength of a Nation, and to the riches and revenue of the Prince.

Yet all this notwithstanding, I must crave leave to say, that the Inlargement of Trade hath usually been attended with as much Latitude of Conscience, and the heat of that with as much coldness and indifferency in Religion. It is commonly observed to introduce great diversity of Opinions, and consequently to abate of mens Zeal for, and Reverence of, an Uniformity in what was before establishd. For men by conversing much abroad or with Strangers, get a tincture of the Humours and Perswasions, of the Customs and Sentiments of those Persons with whom, and places where, they have to do. And this is most remarkable true of the *English*, whose temper is not so stubborn and inflexible as that of some other People, nor so fastuouse and contemptuous of other mens Opinions and Practices. Their good nature prompts to look and think favourably upon such things as they see in request with others;
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and from hence they proceed to admiration and at last to affect the novelty ; and then they bring over with them and set to sale at home many a new fangle amongst other vendible commodities.

The wise Law-giver of the *Lacedemonians*, of whom I have had heretofore occasion to speak, in contemplation of this danger, and that the Laws and Government might not be disturbed with Novelty, absolutely forbid Trade or Traffick, and so much as travailing into other Countreys, lest the Citizens should barter away their own Laws and Customs for those of other Cities. But thanks be to God, there is no necessity of having recourse to such a violent Remedy ; the Laws of our Religion do both admit of, and direct and govern Commerce, and the reasonableness of our Christian Religion in general, and of the *Englisb* Reformation in particular is such, as that it may be well hoped they may rather gain than lose Profelytes by being confronted with any other Institutions, and allure considerate men to the embracing of them, whilst some lighter and incogitant persons may be betrayed by their Curiosity. All the Use therefore that I make of this Observation concerning Trade is, That since there is some danger to Religion thereby, all

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those that do not make a God of the World, and take Gain for Godliness, will think these three things following to be reasonable.

1. That since it is plain, the same Means will not preserve Uniformity in Religion, nor conserve the Reverence and Happiness of the Church in a Nation vastly addicted to Foreign Commerce, as would do where the more simple way of Agriculture was attended to (as it was amongst the *Spartans* and this Nation formerly) that therefore there may be such Laws provided, and such care taken as that the one be not discouraged, nor the other corrupted.

2. That every man will not only take care to inform himself in the grounds of his own Profession of Religion, but also have so much Charity towards the Governours of his own Countrey and this Church, as to think them both as wise and as honest as in other places; that by both these his Reason may be instructed, and his Affections somewhat composed against every assault of Novelty from other mens Opinions or Practices.

3. That at least we will not think it just to impute all the Distractions of Mens Minds and Quarrels against the Church to the badness

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ness of its Constitution, since this point of Trade hath such influence as we see both in the Nature of the thing and in the visible Effects of it.

5. It must not be omitted that both Papist and Atheist, though upon several grounds, combine their Malice against this Church, and use all their several Interests and Endeavours to render it as contemptible as they can.

For the former,

*Manet altâ mente repòstum
Judicium Paridis, spretaq; injuria formæ.*

We know they remember the slur we gave them in our Reformation; they are well aware that the decent Order, the Dignity and ancient Gravity of this Church, reproves and shames the Pageantry of theirs; They forget not how often the eminent Abilities of our Church-men have baffled theirs; therefore they are to be reckoned upon as immortal Enemies. They know, nothing stands so much in the way of their Designs as the Church of *England*. This hath the countenance of the Laws, the support of Reason, the favour of Antiquity, the recommenda-
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tion of Decency. They therefore can easily frame themselves to a complaisance towards all other Sects, because they despise them; but here *oderunt quos metuunt*: their fears and dangers by this, provoke their endeavours, inflame their anger, and suffer them not so much as to dissemble their spite against it. It is well enough known, how under the disguise of Quakers and other names, they have undermined its reputation and given it what disturbance they can; how by their Insinuations into some loose or weaker persons they seek to weaken its powers and draw off her numbers; how they have furnished others with Arguments to impugn it, and subaided all unquiet spirits against her. They that scruple nothing themselves, nor will suffer any to scruple any thing in their own Communion, can teach people to be very nice and squeamish in the Church of *England*. They that are altogether for a blind Obedience at home, preach up tenderness of Conscience abroad; and when an Implicite Faith will do well enough in *Spain* or *Italy*, &c. yet in *England* nothing must content men but Infallible Certainty, and that in the most circumstantial and inconsiderable matters.

Then for the Atheists; They conscious
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of the odiousness of their pretences (though of late arrived at greater impudence than formerly) think it not safe to laugh at all Religions at once, though they equally abhor all. Therefore lest they should ingage too many enemies at once, they deal by Retail, and expose to scorn the several Parties of Christians one after another. But to be sure, the better any Perswasion is, the more industriously they set themselves to depress it; as knowing well, if they can bring that into Contempt, they may be secure of the other, which must one time or other fall of themselves by reason of the unsoundness of their Foundations. Besides it seems something below them to set their wit against a Fanatick, they must have higher game, and their Jestings go off more piquantly when they gratifie the popular envy, by being level'd against that which hath a great stock of Reputation, and the countenance of publick Laws.

These blind Beetles that rose out of filth and excrement, and now buz about the world, hope, not only to cover their shame, but to increase their Party daily by the divisions of Christians; and therefore labour to inflame the Causes, to provoke mens Passions and exasperate their minds one against another.

ther. They scurrilously traduce all that is serious, and study Religion only to find out flaws in it. And what they cannot do by manly Discourse, they endeavour by Buffoonry. In short, It is their manner to dress the best Religion in the world in a phantastical and ridiculous habit, that Boyes may laugh at it, and weak people be brought out of conceit with it, and their Worships made merry with the Comedy.

Now since the Church of *England* is beset with all these Enemies and under the aforesaid Disadvantages, it is no wonder if the felicity and success of it be not a little disturbed. It was noted amongst the Felicities of old *Rome*, as that which gave it the opportunity of growing up to so vast a Greatness, That till it had by degrees subdued all its Neighbours, and was now match for all the World, it had never but one Enemy at once to encounter. Whilest this Church in its first times had only those of the Church of *Rome* to conflict with, it easily triumphed over them and maintained its Peace and Dignity at home: but that now under the Circumstances I have represented in the five foregoing Particulars it bears up so well as it doth,

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doth, is an illustrious argument of its Strength and soundness of Constitution; and they are very severe and uncharitable persons that reckon its Enemies and Misfortunes in the number of its Vices or Faults.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

*Of the more immediate Causes of the Distractions of the Church of England; such as,
 1. Rashness of popular Judgement. 2. Fudaism. 3. Prejudice. 4. Want of true
 Christian Zeal, in the generality of its
 Members.*

Coming now in this Chapter to enquire into the immediate Causes of the Evils we groan under, I do not see how it is possible to be avoided, but that in touching this fore I must make some body or other smart. And therefore I bespeak so much candour of the Reader that he will believe it is not any delight I take to rake in the wounds of my Brethren and fellow-Christians; but that it is meer compassion to the Souls of men, and good will to the publick Peace, and nothing else, that prompts me to this undertaking. For had any other ends swayed with me, I could better have pursued them in silence and privacy, or at least in the choice of some other

other subject than this which is so tender and ticklish. But conscious of my own sincerity in the undertaking, and in confidence of a benign interpretation, I proceed.

1. And First, I perswade my self that it will be manifest to any considerative and impartial person, that a great part of the averſation to the Church of *England*, arises from that which is the constant and known Adversary of every thing that is generous and excellent, namely popular Rashness and Injudiciousness.

When weak persons judge of the Determinations and Counsels of wiser men, and those that pierce no further than the meer surface of things, pass a Verdict upon those whose Reasons are profound and deep; there can be no good Issue expected. It is certain there are many men of honest Hearts, who yet have *not senses exercised* (as the phrase of the Apostle is) whose Intellectuals are either clouded by an unhappy Constitution of Body, or were never well opened and enlarged by Education and Study. Those generally not being sensible of their own infirmity, nor knowing how little that which they understand is, compared with what they are ignorant of, are ready to think there is no larger Sphere

Sphere of Knowledge than that which themselves move in; and by reason that they do *ad pauca respicere, facile pronunciant*, not foreseeing the difficulties, easily come to a conclusion, and censure all that complies not with their own measures.

It's easie to observe men hugging their own Phancies, and entertaining with scorn and contempt things above their capacity, or out of the rode of their meditations. I by no means commend the zeal of that Bishop, *Virgilius* by name, who became a Martyr for the opinion that there were *Antipodes*, though it was demonstrably true, and the contrary impossible. But I observe thence, how severe and rash a bolt folly will discharge. And I little doubt, but that if a man should assert the mobility of the Earth, or some other such opinion (which yet the generality of the Learned are agreed in,) and do it with the like constancy that *Virgilius* did, (if he had the people for his Judges) he would be in danger of the same Fate.

But to come nearer my purpose; It is an Observation, not more antient than true, That the same thing seldom pleases the many and the few; Wise men generally take
middle

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middle Counsels, as finding by Experience, not only Peace but Truth for the most part to be there placed. The Vulgar contrariwise are altogether for Extreame, and when one Extreame disgusts them, run violently to the other without stop or stay. οἱ ἐν μέσῳ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀμφοτέρωθεν κλείνονται, said the Historian, The middle opinion is condemned by both extremes, and those that stand by it, (like those that go about to part a fray) receive blows from both sides.

Erasmus, the glory of his Time and Country, for the sagacity of his wit and simplicity of his temper, because he came not up to the height of either of the then contending Parties (though he was admired by the Wiser) was mortally hated, reproached and persecuted by the Vulgar of both Parties.

It is not much to the honour of Mr. *Calvin*, that he is said to have written to *Bucer* who was employed in the *English* Reformation, That he should take care to avoid moderate Counsels in Religion. In which advice he complied but too much with the humour of the Vulgar, especially of this Nation; at least if the observation of a witty Writer of the last Age be well taken. But perhaps it is not the Levity, but the Spirit
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and Vigor and natural Courage of the people, that middle Counsels are not acceptable to them: but however, it is easie to remember, that when in the late Times some disgusts were taken at the publick management of affairs, no Proposition or Expedient would atone the fault, or propitiate the people, but the utter Subversion of the Government. When Popery displeases, we think our selves never safe till we are run as far the other way; and again when those that have been at the highest pitch of Fanaticism, suspect their standing, and have a new qualm come over them, there is then no remedy, no safety, no Ark but the Church of *Rome*.

Now the Church of *England* cutting by a thread (as it were) between both these Extrems, escapes not a severe Censure on either hand. Those of the Church of *Rome* cannot but confess, that all is good in our Liturgy, only they say it is defective in many things that they have a great value for; Protestants on the other side generally acknowledge the main to be good, but some things they account redundancies, which they would have taken away: And so between them both they give a glorious Testimony to this Church as guilty of the faults of neither Extream, whilst yet she is accused of both.

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But that which I chiefly intend is this ; That a great part of men have not their Minds elevated above the Horizon of their Bodies, nor take an estimate of any thing, but by its impression upon their Senses. From whence it must needs follow, that whatever most powerfully strikes them, must also be most admired by such persons, and nothing else.

Now the Liturgy of our Church being composed plainly, gravely and modestly, no turgid or swelling expressions, no Novelty of phrase or method, no luxuriance of wit or phancy, seems therefore dull and flat to such mens apprehensions. And on the other side, such Prayers as are occasionally conceived and uttered by men of hot tempers (like themselves) with a torrent of words, and in a melting tone, strike them with great admiration, and almost transport them. Inso-much that they are ready to conclude (without more ado) the former to be a cold formal Service; but these latter to be the very Dictates and Impulses, the Breathings of the Holy Spirit.

And so for Preaching ; Those Divines that deliver themselves gravely and confidently,
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rately, that take care to *speake the words of truth and soberness*, that endeavour calmly and modestly to enlighten the minds of their Hearers, seem to such people heavy and unedifying. But if there be a sort of heady and incogitant Preachers, that have more heat than light, that thunder in mens ears with a stentorian noise, and make use of such dreadful expressions as raise the humours and passions of the body, or such soft similitudes as demulce and mitigate them, or such mystical representations as transport their imaginations and confound them; those seem mighty-powerful-soul-saving-Preachers. Who sees not that this must needs be a mighty disadvantage to the Church of *England*; when Devotions shall be esteemed by their *noise* and not by their *weight*, and Sermons tryed not by their *light* but *heat*?

But if to all this, Truth and falshood also, and that in the most sublime points, and, which is more, Expediency it self must be decided at Vulgar Tribunals, so that there shall not be that Doctrine so profound or nice, which every man will not take upon him to determine, nor that Reason so subtle, which the crassest minds shall not pretend to understand, nor that Rule or Art of Government, which shall not fall under vulgar cogni-

cognizance ; if every mans Mind become the Standard and Touchstone of every Truth : it is impossible (upon the suppositions before laid) but there must be dissentions, disputes and distractions in such a Church, and yet neither the Doctrine, Discipline, Liturgy, nor Ministers thereof be to blame. For unless the *Reformers* of such a Society be no wiser than the *Vulgar*, and the Clergy and Governours and all Learned men have the same sentiments with the people ; unless, I say, all could be alike *wise* or alike *weak*, (where all will be alike Judges) it is absolutely impossible it should be otherwise.

Those therefore of the Church of *Rome* have a cure for this ; They appropriate all Judgement to the Clergy, and deal with the rest of Mankind as Sots and Ideots, not permitting them to read the Scriptures in the Vulgar Tongue, lest they should grow too wise to be governed ; nay, they will not allow them to be masters of common sense, but require them to believe the most contradictory Propositions, and make that an Article of Faith which a man may confute by his Fingers ends. This is an admirable way to wean them from their own Understanding, to unlearn them Disputes, and to exercise them to believe in and obey their Rulers.

This way makes the people *sheep* indeed, but silly ones. God-wot.

But the Church of *England* hath no such Antidote of Disputes and Divisions as this is. She makes not herself the Mistress of mens Faith, or imposes upon their Understandings; She teacheth that our Saviour hath delivered the Mind of God touching the points of necessary Belief or essential to Salvation fully, and plainly to the capacity of every considering man that will use the means; and in other lesser matters debatable amongst Christians, she allows a judgement of Discretion. Only since the Peace of the Church often depends upon such points as Salvation doth not, and since in many of those, every man is not a competent Judge, but must either be in danger of being deceived himself and of troubling others, or of necessity must trust some body else wiser than himself: She recommends in such a case as the safer way for such private persons to comply with publick Determinations, and in so advising, she joyntly consults the peace of the Church and the quiet of mens Consciences. So all that she challenges is a Reverence, not a blind Obedience. And if after all this, some people will be foolish, and proud, and contentious, she hath no further Remedy, than

to declare them guilty of Sin and Contumacy, and that not sufficing, to cast them out of her Communion. But when all this is done, men may be peevish and wilful, and render the State of that Church unhappy, whose Constitution is neither guilty of Tyranny nor Remissness.

Now if it shall be objected to this Discourse, That this cause from the consideration of the Folly and Injudiciousness of men is too general, and will equally extend to all other Reformed Churches as well as our own, and especially that this might have brought forth all the Evil we complain of, and impute to it, in the former Age as well as now, for as much as the generality of people were not much wiser then, than now. To this I answer in two points.

I. If other Reformed Churches have not found the effects of Ignorance and Arrogance joyned together as well as we (which doubtless they have done more or less) it is not to be ascribed to the happiness of their Constitutions, but to the unhappiness of their outward Circumstances. Their Poverty, Oppression, Persecution, or being surrounded with common Enemies, hath probably prevailed upon them to lay aside or smother their

private Opinions, and to check their animosities, more than our Gratitude to the Almighty for our Ease and Peace and Plenty and Liberty hath done upon us. Who knoweth not that the Church of *Corinth* first needed the severe check of an Apostle for their wantonness and divisions, that *one was of Paul, another of Apollos, &c.* And who can give a more probable account of this their Luxuriancy, than from the riches, ease, plenty and liberty of that City? Or who hath not observed, that whilst the Primitive Christians were in Adversity surrounded with Enemies and under Pagan persecuting Emperours, so long they had one heart and mind, they submitted their private phancies and peculiar sentiments to publick safety; but the same constituted Churches quickly broke out into Quarrels and Factions, as soon as a warm Sun of Prosperity shone upon them? We have reason accordingly not to charge our unhappiness upon our Religion, nor our troubles upon our Prosperity, but to lay them at the right door, of our Folly and Weakness.

2. That these Evils broke not out in our Church sooner, since the seeds of them were sown long ago, is due to the joy and contentment that men generally took at their first emerging

emerging out of the darkness and superstitions of the Church of *Rome* by the Reformation, which was proportionable to the deliverance; and so great, that for a time it suffered them not to be very solicitous about little disputes or scrupulosities. Like the people of *Greece* when the *Romans* at the *Istmian* Games by a publick Heraid pronounced them and their Countrey free, they forgot the contentions they came together about, and used to be infinitely taken with. But when the Novelty of this great blessing was over, Protestants forgot the great and intolerable burdens they had escaped, and then began scrupulously to weigh every petty inconvenience; and (by the goodness of God) not having a publick Enemy to unite them, quarrel amongst themselves. This therefore must be admitted as one cause of our unhappiness.

2. That which I would assign as a second cause, I know not well what name to give to it: But for want of a better expression, I will adventure to say, That a great part of this Nation having been leavened with *Jewish Superstition* or *Jewish Traditions*, hath thereby been indisposed to an uniform reception of, and perseverance in the Reformation of Religion held forth by this Church. How this sowre leaven should

should get in amongst us is not very easie to determine : Some Stories would incline a man to think that it had been in the veins of this Countrey, ever since it first received the Christian Faith ; for the greatest difficulty *Austin* the Monk found here, was to bring the Inhabitants from the observation of *Easter*, and some other Rites according to the manner of the *Jewish* and *Eastern* Churches, to that of the *Roman* and *Western* ; and the doing it (as the Story tells us) cost the lives of twelve hundred Monks, who it seems stubbornly opposed his Innovation. Which (by the way) is a good argument that this Church owes not its first Christianity to the Church of *Rome* or this Monastick Apostle, as they would perswade us ; since it is plain by this passage, that he made our Ancestors only *Romanists*, but found them Christians before, and perhaps of a better and more generous race of Religion than that he ingrafted upon the old stock. But I will make no use of this ; for perhaps we may find the rite of this *Judaism* nearer hand, if we observe that the great Patriarchs of the Non-conformity, such as *Cartwright*, *Ainsworth*, *H. Broughton* and others, were great Students of the *Rabbinical writings*, and the main of their Learning lay that way ; and as by this sort of Study (which was rare in those

those dayes,) they got the reputation of great *Rabbies*, so perhaps they might not only by this means be bewitched with the *Jewish* fancies themselves, but propagate their unhappy Sentiments through their followers to this generation.

But howsoever it came to pass, the matter of Fact will appear undeniably true, That a vein of *Judaism* runs through the whole Body of the dissenters from the Church of *England*. Of which I will give some Instances.

And the *first* shall be their grand *Hypothesis*, That *nothing is lawful in the service of God, but what is expressly prescribed in Scripture*. This is the Characteristical Doctrine of that Party, and in confidence of the truth of which, they cry out of us for uncommanded Rites, and humane Inventions and little less than Idolatry. Now whosoever well considers this Tenet, will find it so irrational in it self, so servile and destructive of all Christian Liberty, and making so ill reflections upon the Goodness of God (as I shall have occasion to shew hereafter) that it is not to be imagined how it should enter into the minds of men, much less find such entertainment and so zealous patronage, amongst so many honest and devout men,

men, were it not, that they studied the Old Testament better than the New, and grafted their Christianity upon the stock of *Judaism*. And the case must be after this manner. They considering and observing how punctually God prescribed some very little matters touching the Temple and National Worship of the *Jews* in the Law of *Moses*, carry this notion along with them to the New Testament, and thence infer, That Christ Jesus must needs have also as punctually determined all the Rituals of the Christian Worship: Otherwise he is *not faithful in his house as Moses was in his*, (for that Scripture is brought to prove it.) That all absolutely Necessaries are so determined by our Saviour we readily grant them, and that all those Rites that are prescribed by him are necessary to be observed, we will yield them; but that nothing is lawful but what is to be found so prescribed, we utterly deny, and they will never be able to prove. Nor indeed would they ever have been led by any principle of reason to think of or expect such a thing, had it not been by the aforesaid prejudice. But having gotten that notion into their heads, they will fancy the New Testament to comply with it, or writhe it to their sense, though with never so much violence.

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Of affinity with the former is another Notion of theirs, *That all Princes and Law-givers are bound to conform the Municipal Laws of their several Dominions to the Institutions of Moses*; and where this is not done, *sc.* where Princes make other Decisions of Cases, or appoint other Punishments than that Law allows, they are in danger to have their Constitutions declared null, and themselves irreligious.

This is a mistake as wide as the former, highly injurious to Sovereign Princes and dangerous to Kingdoms and States, in a great measure disannulling the publick Laws, and stripping the Governours of all proper Legislative power.

But that which I consider now in this mistake, is not the consequence and Effects, but the rise and Causes of it, which seems to be no other than the fondness the *Jews* had to their Laws, and which they express in their Writings, as if those Laws God gave them by *Moses*, were not only best for them; but best in themselves also. The foundation of which Error is both detected and confuted by this consideration, That God was not only the God, but the temporal Prince of
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the *Jews* in a peculiar manner, so as he is not of any other people in the world; he calls himself their King, appoints his Lieutenants and Vicegerents, divides his Subjects their Inheritance, gives them Laws, takes up a Residence amongst them, appoints their way of Address to him for Judgement and resolution of weighty and extraordinary Cases, and reserves many Cases to himself, and sometimes inflicts Punishments by his own hand. Any man that considers these things well, will never go about to make those Laws oblige other Nations, or require necessarily all Princes to conform their Policies to that of *Judaea*, till he can persuade himself that every Nation hath the peculiar Priviledge of the *Jews*, and that every Civil Government is or ought to be a Theocracy.

A *third* Instance shall be their notion of *Excommunication*, which they hold *must be denounced by a Synod or Presbytery, and the Prince as well as the people must be subject to the sentence.* And this against all Rules of Government, the Prerogatives of Princes and the Peace of Kingdoms. But because it was thus amongst the *Jews*, or at least some of the Writers of that Nation say so, (whether true or false is not well considered) therefore this is the only Gospel way.

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I must by no means omit their Superstition about the *Lords Day*, which must be called a *Sabbath* too, though such name is nowhere given it either in the New Testament or in any antient Writer that I know of; but contrariwise alwayes opposed to it. But that's the least matter. The *Lords Day* with these men must have all the nicety of observation that the *Jewish Sabbath* had; and which is yet worse, *such observation thereof* made one of the *principal parts of Religion*. And because God appointed the *Sabbath* amongst the *Jews* to be a *sign between him and them*, and to distinguish them from all other people, therefore in the New Testament the superstitious observation of the *Lords Day* must be the *principal Character of a godly man*. He that considers well this matter can find no original of it but perfect Judaism introduced into Christianity. And methinks any unprejudiced man should be convinced of this by this one observation, That this kind of observation of the *Lords Day* distinguishes this sort of *English* Protestants from all other Protestants and Christians in the whole world besides; It being in no Church or Countrey observed with that punctuality and in that Sabbatical manner, as by those persons. Whence it's plain, that
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such observation thereof could neither be derived from Christianity in general, nor from Protestantism as such, but meerly from a Jewish tincture these persons have received.

A *fifth* Instance shall be their Doctrine of *Absolute Predestination*. Which though it be not peculiar to these men, yet is so universally and ardently imbraced by the men of that way, as is scarce to be parallel'd. And he that seeks the Source of so odd an Opinion, can in my opinion pitch no where more probably, than upon the absolute Decree of God to favour the posterity of *Abraham* for his sake. It pleased God to bestow the good Land of *Canaan* upon the descendants of that good man, and he resolved and declared he would do it without respect of their deserts: now this is made a sufficient ground to conclude, That accordingly as he disposed in this Temporal affair, so he will proceed by the same way of Prerogative in determining the Eternal Doom of Men; Though the New Testament never so often assure us that at the great day God will Judge the world in righteousness, and without respect of persons, render to every one according to his works.

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I will add but one more, which is their *superstitious observation and interpretation of Prodigies*. To this a great number of this Party are so addicted, that every unusual Accident, every new Appearance in the World, be it in Heaven above or in the Earth below, is presently commented upon, and applications made of the errand of it: though for the most part with Folly as manifest as is the Uncharitableness; yet with Confidence as if it were undoubtedly true, that God governed the affairs of the World by as visible a Providence now, as he did heretofore in the Land of *Judea*; and the remembrance of what he did *then*, seems to be the only imaginable account of this conceit of theirs *now*. Whereas (besides the irreverence towards the Prerogative of God that this phancy is guilty of, in tying the Almighty to one Method) there is plain reason why such a visible dispensation of Providence was expedient under the Old Testament, and not so in the New. Which it would be too great a digression (though not an unprofitable one) here to assign.

Many other Instances might be given of this kind, but I have made choice of these, because they contain the principal Doctrines and most Characteristical Practices of the

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Non-conformists; and these carrying so plainly the marks of *Judaism* upon them, and being no otherwise accountable than upon those Principles, I think I said not improperly, when I called *Judaism* the second Cause of our Unhappiness; since any man may easily see, that such Notions and Principles as these are, must needs indispose those that are leavened with them, to Conformity to, or perseverance in, the Church of *England*.

3. But if the weakness of Judgement or bad Instruction only obstructed the prosperity of this Church, it were not very difficult to find a Remedy: but alas! the minds of a great number of men are under such Prejudices as have barricado'd them up and rendered them almost inaccessible; and that I reckon as a third Cause of our Distractions.

Prejudice is so great an evil that it is able to render the best Discourses insignificant, the most powerful Arguments and convictive evidence ineffectual; this stops mens Ears against *the voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely.*

This alone was able to seal up the Eyes of the Gentile World against the Sun of Righteousness when he shone upon them in
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his brightest glory, and to confirm them, in their blind Idolatries, when the God that made Heaven and Earth gave the fullest discoveries of himself that it was fit for mankind to expect.

Upon the account of this the *Jews* rejected that *Messias* they had so long expected, and gloried in before he came, though he exactly answered all the Characters of Time, Place, Lineage, Doctrine and Miracles that their own Writings had described him by.

Nay, 'twas Prejudice abused the honest minds of the Disciples themselves, so that they could not for a long time believe those things Christ Jesus told them from the Scripture must come to pass, only because they were against the grain of their Education, and were cross to the persuasions they had received in common with the rest of the *Jews*.

No wonder then if the Church of *England* suffer under Prejudice amongst those, that have not only seen it stigmatized with the odious marks of Popery and Superstition, and had been drawn into a *Solemn League and Covenant* against it, as if it had been an act of the highest Religion to despise and ex-
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ecrate it, and so had both their Credits and their Consciences engaged against it ; But also had lived to see it proscribed for near twenty years by a prevailing Faction.

Few have that Generosity and strength of mind to bear up against the torrent of times, or Confidence enough to oppose the impetuosity of common vogue and prevailing opinion: There are not many have the sagacity to discern the true images of things through those thick mists that cunning Politicians cast about them. It is very ordinary to take the condemnation of any Person or Party for a sufficient Proof of the Accusation, and to think the Indictment proved, if the Sentence be past with common consent. It was enough both with the *Jews* and *Gentiles* against our Saviour, that he was condemned as a Malefactor, the Ignominy of his Cross was a greater Argument against him, with the generality, than the excellency of his Doctrine or Evidence of his Miracles was for him.

This Church was dealt with like the Great Lord *Strafford*, run down by common Fame, oppressed by Necessity, not by Law or Reason, and made a Sacrifice to the enraged Multitude.

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The Arguments against it were not *weighed*, but *numbred*: As that great Lords Impeachment was of Accumulative *Treason*, so was the Churches of *Popery*; there was more in the Conclusion, than could be made out by the Premises; and in the summ total, than in the particulars of which it consisted: for though no one point of Popery or superstition could be proved against it, yet it must be so upon the whole. This being agreed, the cry then is, *Crucifige*, destroy it root and branch. And now was the Church seemingly dead, and (as I said before) buried too for near twenty years; but when by the wonderful Providence of God it was raised again, as it was matter of equal Joy and wonder to all such as were not too far under the power of these Prejudices, so it could not be expected otherwise but that weak and timorous persons should run from it as from a Ghost and Spectre.

To all which add, That it was the corrupt Interest of some to deceive others into an ill opinion of it; partly as being intraged that by the Churches unexpected Revival, they lost its Inheritance which they had divided amongst themselves, partly being conscious to themselves that by reason of their

no more than vulgar abilities, they could be fit to fill no extraordinary place in the Church, and yet were not able to content themselves with any ordinary one, and therefore chose to set up a Party against it, and become Leaders of a Faction, since they might not be Governours of a Church. And when it is come to that pass *that by this craft we get our Livings*, like the Silver-smiths at *Ephesus*, no wonder if Apostolical Doctrine and Government be cryed down, and the Great *Diana* be cryed up. The summ is this; Some men were blindly led by their Education, others by their Interest, a third sort by their Reputation, to make good what they had ingaged themselves and others in; and these three things are able to form a great Party against the Church.

4. The Fourth and Last Cause, (and I wish it be not the greatest) of the Distractions and ill estate of this Church, is the want of true Christian Zeal, and of a deep and serious sense of Piety; in defect of which hath succeeded that wantonness, curiosity, novelty, scrupulosity and contention we complain of.

What was it made the Primitive Church so unanimous, that it was not crumbled in-

to Parties, nor mouldered away in Divisions, nor quarrell'd about Opinions, nor separated one part from another upon occasion of little scruples? How came it to pass, (as I observed in the Introduction to this Discourse) that all good men were of one way, and all evil men of another, that those that travailed to the same City the heavenly *Jerusalem*, kept the same Rode and parted not company?

It could not be that they should be without different apprehensions, for mens Parts were no more alike, nor their Educations more equal in those times than now.

There were then several Rites and Ceremonies that might have afforded matter of scruple (if the Christians had been so disposed) as well as now: and I think both more in number, and as lyable to exception as any thing now in use. There was then *bowing towards the East*, observation of *Lent* and other dayes, *distinction of Garments*, and innumerable other Observations in the early dayes of *Tertullian*; and yet neither any Scripture brought to prove them, nor any such proof thought necessary, and yet they were observed without suspicion on one side, or objection on the other. *Harum &*

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aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum, si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies, sed traditio pretenditur auctrix, consuetudo conservatrix & fides observatrix, saith he in his Book De Corona militis.

Ep. II. 8.
119. St. Austin saith, in his time [the number and burden of Ceremonies was grown as great as under the Law of Moses, and therefore wishes for a Reformation thereof, in his Epistles to Januarius; yet never thought these things a sufficient ground of Separation from the Church.

There was then some diversity of Expression in which the Governours and Pastors of several Churches delivered themselves, yet did they not dispute themselves hereupon into Parties, nor accuse one another of false Doctrine, or either Side make the division of the Church the Evidence of its Orthodoxy, or the Trophy of its Victory. The true reason then of the different Event of the same Causes then and now, seems to be this, That in those dayes men were sincerely good and devout, and set their hearts upon the main; the huge Consequence and concern of which easily prevailed with those holy men to overlook their private satisfactions. They were intent upon that wherein the Power of God-

Godliness consisted, and upon which the Salvation of Souls depended; and so all *that* was secure, they were not so Superstitiously concerned for Rituals, nor so unreasonably fond of Opinions, as to play away the Peace of the Church and the Honour of Religion against trifles and meer tricks of wit and fancy. They considered that they all had one God, one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, in which they all agreed; and these great matters were able to unite them in lesser. They, Good men, found enough to do to mortifie their Passions, to bear their burdens of Affliction and Persecution, to withstand the Temptations of the Devil, and the contagion of evil Examples from the world, and had not leisure for those little Disputes that now imploy the minds of men, and vex the Church. They spent their Heat and Zeal another way, and so their Spirits were not easily inflammable with every petty Controversie.

But when men grow cold and indifferent about great things, then they become fervent about the lesser. When they give over to mind a holy Life, and heavenly Conversation, then they grow great Disputers, and mightily scrupulous about a Ceremony. When they cease to study their own hearts, then they

they become censorious of other men; then they have both the leisure and the confidence to raise Surmises and Jealousies, and to find fault with their Superiours.

In short, then and not till then, do the little Appendages of Religion, grow great and mighty matters in mens esteem, when the Essentials, the great and weighty matters are become little and inconsiderable.

And that this is the Case with us in this Nation is too evident to require further proof, and too lamentable a subject for any good Christian to take pleasure in dilating upon. I conclude therefore, in this Point lyes a great part of the Unhappiness of this Church and Kingdom.

PART



PART II.

Wherein several serious Considerations are propounded, tending to perswade all English Protestants to comply with, and conform to, the Religion and Government of this Church, as it is established by Law.

CHAP. I.

A Reflection upon divers wayes or Methods for the Prevention and Cure of Church-Divisions.



Having in the former Part of this Discourse, diligently enquired into, and faithfully recited the principal Causes of the contents with, and secession from this Church; It would now ill become Christian Charity to rest here; for (God knows)

knows) neither the Evils nor the Causes afford any pleasant speculation.

It was a bad state of things at Rome which the Historian reports in these words, *Nec morbos nec remedia pati possumus*, That they were come to so ill a pass that they could neither indure their Distempers, nor admit of the Remedies. But I perswade my self, though the condition of our affairs be bad enough, yet that it is not so deplorable as to discourage all Endeavours of a cure. And in this hope I take the courage to propound the following considerations; wherein if I be deceived and miss of my aim, I shall notwithstanding have that of *Quintilian* to comfort my self withal, *Probabilis est cupiditas honestorum, & vel tutioris est audacia tentare ea, quibus est paratior venia.*

It hath not been the single Unhappiness of this Church alone, to be molested with Disputes, loaden with objections, and dishonoured by Separation. Nor can it be hoped that where the business is Religion, and the concern Eternal Life, that men should incuriously swallow every thing without moving any question or stirring any dispute. And therefore all Churches must of necessity more or less

less have conflicted with the same difficulties we complain of. And consequently the disease being so common, it cannot be but that many and divers Remedies have been tryed and made use of. And out of that store we will in this Chapter make election of such as seem best to fit the condition of the Patient and are most practicable in the Case.

And in the first place, they of the Church of *Rome*, (as many and great Schisms as they have laboured under formerly, yet) now glorying in their Unity and Peace, and upbraiding all others with their respective Distractions, may seem to have arrived at some remarkable skill, and to be fit to be advised withal; and they attribute an admirable efficacy to the following Method.

First, By way of Prevention, they prescribe that the people be kept in profound *Ignorance*, and then they suppose, they will never trouble the Church with Disputes, nor themselves with Scruples. Let them but be blind enough, and they will swallow many a Flye that others strain and boggle at: keep them up in the dark like Birds or Wild Beasts, and you will render them tame and manageable.

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They affirm Pictures to be Books good enough for the Laity, and say, Those are the best Sheep that know nothing but their own Fold. *The Priests lips*, they confess, *should preserve knowledge*; but so they preserve it from the people, it is no great matter whether they have it themselves or no.

This Opiate or stupefactive Ignorance these Empiricks mightily cry up; and for proof of the vertue of it, go but over into *Spain* or *Italy*, and you shall observe what strange cures it hath done. It hath made a sagacious people as any in the world naturally, so far from Disputes in Religion, that they scarce know what it means. Administer but a large dose of this, and it shall have the same effect the Plague of Darknes had in *Agypt*, *that suffered no man to stir out of his place.*

But this Advice how successful soever it hath been in other places, will not be admitted in *England* for two reasons.

1. If it were commendable in it self, yet it comes too late; for the people of *England* know so much already that the only way

way to cure the inconveniences of that, is to let them know more. And as an Excellent Person hath well observed concerning Atheism, *That a little smattering in Philosophy disposes men to it, by intangling them in Second Causes which they cannot explicate, but a through insight into it leads them through that perplexed maze to the discovery of the First Cause of all things:* So 'tis only superficial knowledge in Christianity that gives occasion to our troubles, when men think they know, but do not; or because they know a little, conceit they understand all that is knowable, and hereupon refuse instruction, and oppose their private opinions to the publick wisdom. Whereas did these men see further into things, they would then discover a reason of many things they are now dissatisfied with, or at least distrust their own understandings and grow modest and peaceable.

2. Besides, if this Advice came timely, yet we take the Remedy to be worse than the Disease; for we esteem it better (if one be necessary) to erre like Men, than to be driven like Beasts, or acted like Puppets.

The Gospel Church is frequently called in Scripture *the Kingdom of Heaven, and the*

the Kingdom of light; but by this course of blind Devotion and stupid Ignorance, it would become more like Hell, which they say hath heat without light.

God in the Gospel requires a *reasonable service*, and it can never be consistent that those that pretend Christ Jesus is risen upon them as a Sun of Righteousness, should think to worship this Sun by turning their backs upon him, or shutting their Eyes against his light. If it were or could be so, then this Proposition would be true, That the way to become good Christians, is to cease to be Men.

2. Secondly, They direct us to an *Infalible Judge* of all Controversies. And this they so much magnifie and represent as absolutely necessary to Peace, that they tell us we shall labour in vain, in the use of all other Expedients, and only roll up a weight with infinite pains, that will with the greater violence return upon us again, till we make use of this Remedy.

But it is so Mountebank-like to pretend to Infalible Cures, that we desire to be resolved of these two or three things before we can comply with the advice.

I. We

1. We would fain know how it came to pass, that so important a point as this is (of an Infallible Judge of Controversies) which it is pretended would secure the Peace of all States, preserve the Concord and the Dignity of all Churches, stop the mouths of all Atheists, prevent the Sin and the Damnation of many Souls, is no more plainly asserted in Scripture, nor proved by Reason, nor better agreed of amongst themselves, that thus recommend it? A man would reasonably expect that a business of this nature; (which is therefore of more value than any one Article of Faith, in as much as that it hereupon depends what shall be so,) should have been more clear and evident than those things that depend upon it: but contrariwise, we find that no man ever yet could perswade by Reason, *that one certain man in the world was more than a man, and all the rest less.*

And then for Scripture, that plainly tells us, *that all men are lyars, i. e.* such as may deceive, or be deceived; and most undoubtedly would never have made such a distinction of Christians, as *strong men* and *babes* in Christ, nor made it our duty to consider one anothers weakness, and practise mutual

mutual forbearance, if it had intended any where to direct us to such an Umpire as should have ended all disputes, and made all men equally certain.

But then for agreement amongst themselves, where to lodge this Infallibility, whether in the Pope alone, or in the Pope and Consistory, or in a General Council, or in all these together, or in something else, is, for ought I see, a Question that needs an Infallible Judge to determine.

2. How comes it to pass that all Controversies are not determined and Disputes ended long ago, if this were true that is pretended?

Whether there be any Infallible Judge to resort to now, is the point in question; but it is certain there was such a thing in the Apostles times: they had the assistance of the Holy Spirit in such a manner as to guide them into all truth, and gave miraculous proofs that they had so, and yet this would not cure all the Schisms, nor resolve all Scruples, nor silence all Disputes then. And that Infallibility in a Pope or any other person, (if it were there to be found) should have better success now than it had in those
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more sincere and simple times of Christianity, I think is not very reasonably expected.

Besides, We find manifestly that those that glory so much of this Remedy, have not found such benefit by it, as that they commend it to us for. For it is well enough known, that the *Romanists* have their Disputes as well as we; The *Franciscans* against the *Dominicans*, and the *Jansenists* against the *Molinists*, and their several Perswasions managed with as much heat as any of our Controversies; saying that indeed they all agree in *uno tertio* the Supremacy of the Pope. Therefore we say, *Medice cura teipsum*. Let us see all their own Difficulties decided and Disputes ended, and then, and to be sure not till then, shall we be encouraged to make use of the Remedy.

3. Thirdly, They have another Remedy which I must needs confess hath done strange things and been very successful amongst themselves, and I will transcribe the Receipt of it out of an ingenious Book called *Europa speculum*, pag. 34. of the Edition at the Hague, 1629. in these words: *The particular waies they hold to ravish all affections and fit each humour, are well nigh infinite;*

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there

there being not any thing either sacred or prophane, no vertue nor vice almost, nothing of how contrary condition soever, which they make not in some sort to serve that turn, that each phancy may be satisfied. Whatsoever wealth can sway with the lovers, or voluntary poverty with the despisers of the world; what honour with the ambitious, what obedience with the humble; what great employment with stirring and active spirits, what perpetual quiet with heavy and restive bodies; what content the pleasant nature can take in pastimes and jollity, what contrariwise the austere mind in discipline and rigour; what love either chastity can raise in the pure, or voluptuousness in the dissolute, &c. What change of vows with the rash, or of estate with the unconstant; what pardons with the faulty, or supplies with the defective; what miracles with the credulous, or visions with the phantastical; what gorgeousness of shew with the vulgar and simple, what multitude of Ceremonies with the superstitious, what prayers with the devout; And in summ, whatsoever can prevail with any man either for himself to pursue, or to love and reverence in another, the same is found with them. — On the one side of the street a Cloyster of Virgins, on the other a stye of Courtezans, with publick

lick toleration. This day all in Masks with loosness and foolery, to morrow all in Processions, whipping themselves till the blood follow. To conclude, Never State, never Government in the world, so strangely compacted of infinite contrarieties, all tending to the entertainment of the several humours of men.

Now no wonder that this course should keep them generally contented, since it is in effect an universal Toleration, a permitting men to be and do what they list, so they cast but some garb of Religion or other over it.

In the *United Provinces*, it is commonly said, There is an allowance of all Opinions; but the truth, as I am informed, is no more but this, That that State being made up of a combination of several Free Cities, he that finds not his Opinion countenanced in one City so much as he desires, may retire to another where it is publickly *profest*. So in the Church of *Rome*, he that likes not the debaucheries of the Court, may enjoy severities in a Monastery, he that is offended with one Order, may make choice of another; a man may be a *good Catholick*, as they call it, without
I 3
being

being a good Christian; he may perfectly accommodate his own humour, if he have but the wit to make a right choice for himself; he need not be at the Self-denial to conform his humour to his Profession, but may fit his inclination with a way of Religion, if he have not prevented himself by an imprudent election. He may almost do any thing, provided, as *Erasmus* observes, *He let but two things alone, which are the only dangerous points, that is to say, that he meddle not with the Popes Crown, nor the Monks Bellies.*

But we of this Church are not of opinion, that such a Peace as this is, is worth the prostitution of Religion, and the debauching of mens minds and Consciences; and have too much simplicity and sincerity of Devotion, to make use of this Remedy, to put an end to our Distractions.

4. Fourthly, But the great and infallible Remedy is yet to come, and is that which others express by several words, *Axes, Halters, Racks, Fire and Faggot*; but they by one word that signifies as much as all those, *viz. the Holy Inquisition*. This is that Engine that stretches all mens Intellectuals to the proportion of the Priests, or cuts them off

to the publick Standard; this decides all Controversies, silences all Disputes, resolves all Scruples, and makes perfect Peace where-ever it comes. But,

Though we grant all this, yet will not this down with *Englishmen*. For besides that our Gospel is not like (what they say of) the Laws of *Draco*, written in blood, nor have we any Rubrick, to kill men for *quietness sake*; besides this, I say, the Genius of this Nation is both too couragious and too compassionate, to be this way Governed.

No people in the world are less moved by the apprehension of death and danger than they, and no people are more tender of the Lives of others than they. For generally these two Virtues are inseparable, and the most generous tempers are commonly the most merciful. The *English* will be led like Men, but not driven like Beasts. They have great minds that will be moved by example, and wrought upon by kindness, and melted by good nature; but will sooner suffer themselves to be broken in pieces, than that cruelty shall force them, or fear and danger prevail over them.

It is generally observable here, that no Laws so soon grow in desuetude, and are rendered unpracticable, as those that are too severe. It is counted a butcherly way of Chirurgerie with us, for every slight wound to cut off the member. And the exercise of so much Cruelty upon the account of Religion, by those Blood-letters in Queen *Maries* time, hath (thanks be to God) made that Profession detestable to this day; and it looked so ill in the *Romanists*, that we shall never be perswaded to practise it our selves.

Therefore none of the *Romanists* Expedients will work the Cure we desire in this Church.

Let us see then what other courses there are to be taken, and there remain yet these three to be considered of. 1. *Universal Toleration*. 2. *Comprehension*. 3. *Instruction and Consideration*.

1. *Universal Toleration*. This is highly commended by some as the most Christian Remedy, to let all grow together till the harvest. We are told, "That it was it
"made

“made the Primitive Church so happy, and
 “we may observe that this the Christians
 “pleaded for under persecuting Emperours,
 “affirming, *That it was every mans natural*
 “*right to serve what God, and use what Reli-*
 “*gion he thought good.* This the Great Con-
 “stantine declared at his first entrance upon
 “the Empire, and they say that every Prince
 “is bound to do so too.

“Besides, it is affirmed, that this is the best
 “way of propagating Truth and giving it Re-
 “putation, and making its Triumphs conspi-
 “cuous, by setting it upon even ground, and
 “giving it no advantage in the encounter of
 “Error. And that the minds of men will be as
 “open to truth as falshood, when they are de-
 “livered from the prejudice, That it is Power
 “and Interest make men of such or such Opi-
 “nions.

“That this is the only way to make a
 “Learned Clergy, when they shall have a
 “necessity upon them to be able to prove sub-
 “stantially whatever they expect should be
 “received.

“And in fine, That the only way to make
 “peaceable Subjects, a rich Countrey
 “and a happy Prince is to open a *Pan-*
 “*theon,*

"*theon*, to give Liberty to all Religions.

But two things would be considered of in this point.

First, That whatsoever fine things are said of this, or whatever collateral advantage may be reaped by it, they are of no other force, than to incline the Magistrate prudentially in some cases to use indulgence; for it never was nor will be proved, that it is the express duty of a Christian Magistrate to tolerate all Opinions whatsoever; for some are such as destroy all Religion which he is to protect, others subvert all Civil Society which he is to maintain: Therefore it can never be his duty to carry an indifferent hand in Religion.

And though it be true, that the Primitive Christians used such general expressions as are above-specified, and *Constantine* made such a declaration; yet both he and they limited and interpreted themselves afterwards. And indeed it cannot be shewn *de facto* that any Government in the whole Christian World doth tolerate all Opinions whatsoever. For should they do so, it must be supposed, that the Magistrate is to have no Conscience or Religion

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Religion himself, that other men may have no check in theirs whatever it be.

2. But if it were true, that the Magistrate might (if he would) indulge all Sects and Opinions, and also were disposed so to do; yet besides the inconveniencies that would follow, This very thing would be very unacceptable to the people of this Nation; amongst whom there is so much sincerity and heartiness in Religion.

It might go down perhaps amongst such as have a great Indifferency and Lukewarmness in Religion, with such people whose God is their Gain, and whose Religion is their Trade or Interest. But devout and serious people had rather suffer some hardship themselves upon the account of their Consciences, than buy their own quiet at the price of Gods dishonour. And whatever kindness they may have to some dissenters, or fondness to some by-paths themselves, yet rather than open so wide a Gap as that Popery and Atheism it self should enter in by it, they would deny themselves, and think it the duty of all other good Christians to do so too.

2. Com-

2. *Comprehension*; whereby I suppose, is meant the making the terms of Communion more free and easie, an opening the arms of the Church to receive more into her bosome, thereby to enlarge both the Society and Interest of the Church. This is highly recommended by some good men as the most proper expedient for a Protestant Church in our condition, as by means whereof it may be both better strengthened and secured against its Enemies abroad, and enjoy Peace and Contentment at home.

And truly for my part, if such a course please our Governours, I have no mind to oppose any thing to it; but only I desire it may be considered, that there are many things that look very probably in the general notion and speculation, and that would flatter one into a great opinion of them, and expectation from them, which when they come to be tryed, they are no wayes answerable to. Many difficulties occur in the reducing things of this nature to practice, that were not foreseen in the theory, and nothing more common, than for mens minds to deceive them, or their constancy to fail them, so as that they shall take no great pleasure in the enjoyment

enjoyment of that which they languish with desire of, whilst it was sweetned to them by the poinant sauces of hope and fear. Besides, this is not yet done, nor do we know when it will be set about, and it's pity the wounds of the Church should bleed so long as till that can be effected, especially if there be any Balm in *Gilead*, any way of binding them up in the mean time. And there seems to me to remain no other but that of the *third* Consideration, which is the course I have pitched upon to recommend in the following Chapters.

By which I mean nothing else but an Endeavour of better informing the minds of men, in the nature of those things which are the matter of our disputes, and occasions of our disturbances, together with the unhappy consequences of sin and danger in persevering in our present case.

Which if it can be done, we may hope to see the Church recover its ancient felicity and peace, and shall not need for cure of our distempers, to resort either to such severities as are abhorrent to all *Englishmen*, or to such arts as deform Christianity in general, or to be alwayes changing and altering to the great dishonour

dishonour of Protestant Religion in particular. And this I do not despair may be obtained, if those Protestants of this Church and Kingdom that at present differ from the Church in some particulars, will impartially consider the following Propositions.

CHAP

CHAP. II.

Of the true notion of Schism, the sin and mischievous consequents of it.

THough the Will of man deservedly bear the blame of his miscarriages, as being neither under Fatal necessity, nor subject to violence and compulsion, but that it may suspend its own act till it be rightly informed ; yet I have so much charity to humane nature, as to think that most of its irregularities proceed not meerly from stubborn perversion, but mistake of the object. And that therefore Mankind is very pittyable in its errors, having not that clearness of perception, nor presence of mind that higher and more immaterial Spirits have.

And perhaps upon this account, it pleased the Divine Goodness to afford men that which he denyed to the fallen Angels, *secundam tabulam post naufragium*, and to
open

open to them a door of hope by repentance and retrival of their faults. And accordingly I observe, that those that cruelly murdered our Saviour, he prays for them in this form, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do*, Luk. 23. 34. And that it was not only the silly multitude that was so overseen, but also the wisest of his Persecutors, St. Peter bears witness, Acts 3. 17. *I wot that ye did it ignorantly, as also did your Rulers.* So that I am neither destitute of reason nor example for my charity, if I think in the present case, concerning the greatest part of those that are guilty of the distractions of this Church, that did they rightly understand the nature of *Schism* and wherein it consists, or the guilt and mischiefs that attend it, they would easily be induced to change their course. This therefore I shall first offer to consideration.

Touching the sin of dividing the Church, that it is of the deepest dye and greatest guilt, I suppose we shall easily agree; for indeed no body can well doubt of that, who considers what care our Saviour took to prevent it, what pains he took with his Apostles, that they might be thoroughly instructed, and not differ in the delivery of his mind

mind to the world, and with what extraordinary ardour he prayed for them upon this very account, *Joh. 17. 11.*

And the Apostles themselves answered their Masters care with their own diligence and circumspection. He that observes how industrious they were to resist all beginnings of Schism in every Church, to heal all breaches, to take away all occasions of division, to unite all hearts and reconcile all minds; How they taught people to detest this distemper as the bane of Christianity, charging them to use the greatest caution against it, to mark and avoid all those men that inclined that way, as persons of a contagious breath and infectious society; What odious names they give it, as *Carnality, the work of the flesh, and of the Devil*: He, *1 Cor. 3. 4.* I say, that observes all this, cannot but be apprehensive of the greatness of this sin.

But he that shall trace the sense of the Church a little farther, will find the Primitive Christians having it in such detestation, that they thought it equal to the most notorious sins, Idolatry, Murder and Sacrilege.

St. *Cyprian* amongst the rest affirms it to be of so horrible a guilt, that *Martydom was not a sufficient expiation of it*; that to dye
De unitate Eccles.
K for

v. Euseb. *for Christ the Head, would not wash out the*
 Hist. Eccl. *stain of having divided the Church his Body.*
 lib. 6. c. 44.

Novatus a Presbyter in the Church of Rome (in the third Century after our Saviour) having under pretence of Reformation and more than ordinary Sanctity, been the Author of a Schism in that Church, *Dionysius* Bishop of *Alexandria* writes to him after this manner: Brother, you ought to have undergone any inconveniencies whatsoever, rather than divided the Church of God. And if a man must suffer Martyrdome, I protest I think it equally acceptable to God to lay down a mans life for preservation of the peace and unity of the Church, as in testimony against flat Idolatry. For in the latter a man dyes only for his own soul, but in the former he becomes a sacrifice for the whole Church.

And all this was no more than the case deserved, for had the Christian Church been broken into Factions and Parties in those times, as it hath been since, it is not easie to imagine, how it could have resisted the whole World that was united against it: Or if yet it could have subsisted in its several divided Parties, the mischief would have been little less, for then those of after-times would have had the several Opinions and distinct

distinct and peculiar Sentiments of those divided Parties, delivered down to them with equal heat and earnestness, so that it would have proved impossible to have distinguished the Truth of God from the Opinions of men, and the common Faith from the *Shiboleth* and cognizances of the several Sects and Parties. And for this cause it pleased God that his Church should rather in those early dayes be harassed with persecutions, which made it unite it self the closer, and (paring off all superfluities) keep to the necessary and essential Doctrines delivered to it, than to be softened and made wanton by ease, and so to corrupt the Simplicity of the Gospel.

Nor is the importance of Unity much less in these latter dayes of Christianity, forasmuch as all Divisions in all times destroy that beauty and loveliness, which would otherwise attract all mens admiration and affection. Beauty properly is nothing but order and harmony of parts; the excellency of any Fabrick consists not so much in the quality of the materials, as in the curious method they are digested into, and the good respect and correspondence one part hath with another. It is not the sublimity of Christian Doctrine, nor the gloriousness of the Hopes it propounds, that will so re-

commend it to the opinion and esteem of Beholders; as when it shall be said, *Ecce ut Christiani vivunt*, when they shall observe the love, concord and unanimity amongst the professors of it. And the want of this hardens the hearts of *Jews* and *Turks* and *Pagans* more against it, than all the reasons and proofs we can give for it, will soften them; and instead of opening their ears and hearts to entertain it, opens their mouths in contempt and blasphemy against it.

But besides the disadvantage Christianity is exposed to by its Divisions in respect of those that are without, it suffers unspeakably within its own Territories. For who will be perswaded patiently to hear, attentively to consider, or impartially to judge of the discourses of him against whom he hath an animosity? Every thing the truer it is, the more it is for its advantage to be calmly considered: and by how much of the more importance it is, by so much is he that would have his proposition successful, bound in wisdom to take care that the minds of men be not by passion and prejudice indisposed to receive it.

Livy observes, that prodigious Stories, Lyes and Fables find best entertainment in troublesome times, *quia turius finguntur & facilius*

facilius creduntur; men are not then at leisure to consider strictly what is true and false, and so truth loses its advantage-ground, and error succeeds in it. Our Saviour therefore chose to come into the world in a time of the most profound peace, not only because such a season became the Prince of Peace, but especially for this advantage of his Doctrine we are speaking of, namely, that he might find men in calm thoughts and at leisure to consider the reasonableness of his propositions, For who can maturely weigh things when all is in hurry and tumult? Who can discern exactly the difference of things, when all is in motion? Especially who is there, that is willing either to do good to, or to receive good from him, against whom he hath an exulcerate mind?

In short then, and to speak summarily, From Schisms and Divisions amongst Christians, comes that prejudice upon the minds of people that discourages the indeavours, and frustrates the labours of the Ministers of Religion. From thence come all the Suspitions, Jealousies, Whisperings, Backbitings, and all other instances of Uncharitableness. These hinder the fervour of mens Prayers, and abate the edge of their Devotions. They evaporate the true Spirit and Life of

Religion in impertinent Disputes, so that men lose the substance, whilst they contend for the shadow. By these the sinews of all Society are dissolved; for when the Church is disturbed, it seldom rests here, but the State is concerned too; and Schism in the former, proves Sedition in the latter. And this consideration is able to provoke the Magistrate to keep a jealous eye upon the Church and Religion, the flames of which are so ready to set his House also on fire.

All these things are so true in themselves, and withall so generally acknowledged by all Parties, that a man might justly wonder, how any Christian should be guilty of Schism, which all so much abominate. Were it not that we may observe too, that some have found pleasure to get that Child, they would by no means have laid at their own door. Schism is so mishapen as well as ill-begotten a Brat, that no body is willing to father it.

It was the early proof *Solomon* gave of his wisdom, in discovering the true Mother of the living Child, to which both the Litigants laid equal claim. It is a matter of no less importance, and some think of equal difficulty, to make discovery, whom

whom the distractions of the Church are justly to be imputed to. But as that Wise Prince discerned the true Mother by the tenderness of her bowels towards the Infant, so we perhaps may discover the true Children of the Church by their respect and tenderness, and consequently the Schismatics by their irreverence and unnaturalness towards her.

In order to which, I will therefore briefly and plainly describe the true notion of *Schism*; In hopes that when men shall understand, wherein the guilt of it lyes, they will avoid the evil as well as abominate the consequence.

Schism is a voluntary departure or separation of ones self without just cause given, from that Christian Church whereof he was once a member; or, *Schism* is a breach of that Communion wherein a man might have continued without sin.

First, I call it a *Departure or Separation from the Society of the Church*, to distinguish it from other sins, which though they are breaches of the Laws of our Religion, and consequently of the Church, yet are not a renunciation of the Society. For as there

may be a sickly, infirm, nay, an ulcerous member, and yet a member of the body : So there may be such a person, who for his wickedness deserves well to be cast out of the Church, as being a scandal and dishonour to it, yet neither separating himself, nor being cast out of the Society, remains still a member of it.

Now what it is that imports a mans separation of himself or departure from the Church, we shall easily understand ; for it is no more but this, When a man shall either expressly declare that he doth renounce such a Society, or shall refuse to joyn in the acts and exercises of Religion used by such a Society, and to submit to its Authority. So he separates that refuses Baptism, the Lords Supper, or to submit unto the Censures of a Church, and sufficiently declares that he owns himself no longer of it.

Secondly, I call it a *Voluntary* Separation, to distinguish sin from punishment, or Schism from Excommunication. For though the last makes a man no member of a Church, yet it is supposed involuntary, and he doth not make himself so.

Thirdly, I call it a departure from a *particular*

ticular Church of Christ, or from a *part of the visible Church*, to distinguish it from Apostasie, which is a casting off of the whole Religion, the name and profession of Christianity, and not only the particular Society: but the Schismatick is he that, retaining the Religion in general, or at least a pretence of it, changes his Society, associates himself with, or makes up some other body in opposition to that whereof he formerly was.

Fourthly, I add those words *whereof he was a member*, because Schism imports division and making two of that which was but one before. And so *Turks, Pagans, Jews*, cannot be called Schismaticks, having never been of the Church.

These things I suppose are all generally agreed of; The only difficulty is in that which I subjoyn in these words, an *unnecessary* separation, or *without just cause*, or to separate from that Society *wherein I may continue without sin*. And here we meet with opposition on both sides, some defining too strictly, and others extending too far, the causes of Separation.

Of the first sort are the Zealots of the Church of *Rome*, who scarcely allow any thing

thing as a sufficient cause of Separation; for being conscious of so many and great Corruptions in their Church, they know they can scarce allow any thing as a just cause of Separation, that will not be in danger to be used against themselves, and justify the re-cession of all Protestants from them.

But on the other side, some Protestants make the causes of Separation as many and as light as the *Jews* did of Divorce, almost for any matter whatsoever. *Josephus* put away his Wife (as himself tells us) because she was not mannerly enough; another his, because he saw a handsomer than she; a third his, because she drest not his dinner well. As these *Jews* did by their Wives, so do many Christians by the Church; One likes not her dress, another thinks her too costly in her ornaments, a third phantasies some *German* beauty or other that he hath seen in his travails, and all (to make way for new Amours) upon very slender pretences repudiate their former choice. But as our Saviour when the Case was put, found out a middle way betwixt allowing Divorce for no cause at all, and for every cause; so ought it to be done in this business of Schism.

To hit this mark therefore, I say, that
then,

then, and then only, is there just cause of Separation, when Perseverance in the Communion of such a Church cannot be without sin; that is, when she shall impose such Laws and terms of Society, as cannot be submitted to without apparent breach of the Divine Law.

And upon this foundation, I doubt not but we shall quit our selves well on both sides; that is, both justifie our Recession from the Church of *Rome*, and demonstrate the unwarrantableness of the Separation of the Protestants of this Kingdom from the Communion of the Church of *England*. For it's plain on the one hand, that it cannot be sin to separate, when it is sin to communicate, since no Laws of men can abrogate or dissolve the obligation of the expresse Laws of God. And on the other it is as plain, that Schism being so great a sin, and of so extream bad consequence, that which must acquit me of the guilt of it in my separation, can be nothing less than equal danger on the other hand, and that when I may persevere without sin, it must of necessity be a sin to separate upon inferiour dislikes.

This methinks is so plain, that I wonder any doubt should be admitted of in the case.

Not-

Notwithstanding because I observe some men think to wash their hands of the imputation of Schism upon other terms, as namely, Although a Church shall not require or impose such conditions of Communion as are expressly sinful, yet if she shall require indifferent, unnecessary, or at most suspected things ; that in this case, there is enough to excuse the person that shall separate, - from a participation of this sin. And also because this opinion bears it self up by the great name of Mr. *Hales*, as his declared judgement in a little Tract of *Schism* now very much in the hands of men, I will therefore for the clearing of this matter say these three things.

1. I willingly acknowledge, that such a Church as shall studiously or carelessly clog her Communion with unnecessary, burdensome and suspected conditions, is very highly to blame ; yet is it neither burdensomeness nor every light suspicion of sin, but a plain necessity or certainty of sin in compliance, that can justify any Separation ; forasmuch as I cannot be discharged from a plain duty, but by an equal plainness of the sin. And for this phrase *suspected*, it is so loose and uncertain, that there is no hold of it ; men will easily suspect what they have no mind to : and suspicion having this priviledge, we shall

shall quickly evacuate every uneasie duty, and instead of guiding our selves by Gods Word and sound reasoning, we shall give our selves up to the conduct of Passion, Melancholy and Secular Interest.

2. If the non-necessity of some of the terms of Communion be a warrant of separation, then there can be no such sin as Schism at all, forasmuch as there never was, nor probably ever will be, such a Church as required nothing of those in her Communion, but things strictly and absolutely necessary; as I have shewed partly in the Introduction, and could easily make appear at large through all Ages. But to save both my self and the Reader that labour, let him that doubts the truth of this, consider the particular Churches of all Countreys and Ages, and then name one (if he can) that hath admitted of no other Opinions or Rites but such as have been absolutely necessary; nay I much doubt whether any man can be either so facil or humourfome, as to conceit every observance in that Society, which he is most in love withal, to be of that nature, further than peace and the importance of order shall make it so. And if there be no Church without some unnecessary determinations, and if that justifie separation, then may the
 Author

Author of the Tract about *Schism* securely, as he doth somewhat too lightly, call it only a Theological Scarcrow.

3. It will be manifest to any considering person, that some things are necessary to the Constitution and Administration of a particular Church, that are not in themselves necessary absolutely considered. And of this I will give two instances.

The first in the Apostles times; The *abstaining from things strangled and blood*, was by the Council at *Jerusalem* adjudged and declared necessary to be observed by the *Gentiles* in order to an accommodation betwixt them and the *Jews* (of which I shall say more hereafter) and yet I suppose scarce any body thinks the observation of that abstinence so enjoyned, necessary in it self.

The second instance shall be *Church-Government*. Whatever disputes there are about the several Forms of it, as whether it ought to be Monarchical or Aristocratical, Episcopal or Consistorial, and whatever zeal for opinion may transport men to say in favour of either of them, yet I suppose few or none will affirm, that either of these Forms is absolutely necessary; for if one be of absolute

solute necessity, the other must be absolutely unlawful : and not only so, but then also those that do not receive that absolutely necessary Form, can be no Churches; for that Society which is defective in absolutely necessities, can be no Christian Church *. Notwithstanding it is not only lawful to determine and define this unnecessary point, but it is necessary to the constitution of every particular Church, that it be defined one way or other, I mean so far as concerns that Church; for if this be left indifferent in this particular Church, (as perhaps it is in it self in the general) it is manifest there can be no Superiour nor Inferiour, no Governour nor governed, no Order, and consequently a meer Rout and no Church. Therefore some things not necessary in themselves not only may, but must be defined in a particular Church; and consequently it will be no just exception against a Church, nor excuse from Schism, if we separate from that Communion, because such definitions are made in it.

* I do not mean hereby to weaken the authority and reputation of Episcopal Government, which I sincerely think to be both best in it self, Apostolical for its Antiquity, and most accommodate to the Genius of this people, as well as suited to the interests and

civil Government of this Kingdom; what is here said therefore, is either spoken by way of supposition as *Argumentum ad homines*, or in charity, being very loth rashly to unchristian other Foreign Churches.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the nature and importance of those things that are scrupled, or objected against in this Church; and that they are such as may without sin be sacrificed to Peace, and therefore cannot excuse us from sin in separating from the Church upon their account.

IT is the custom of those that have a mind to quarrel, to aggravate and heighten the causes of discontent, to the end that the ensuing mischief may not be imputed to the frowardness of their temper, but to the greatness of the provocation. And passion is such a Magnifying-glass as is able to extend a Mole-hill to a Mountain. The way of Peace therefore is to take just measures of things; and as upon the account of Truth we must not make the matters of our dispute less than they are, so for the sake of both Truth and Peace we ought not to make them greater. Wherefore if men would be perswaded to
set

set aside passion, and calmly consider the nature and just value of those things that we in this Church are divided upon, we should then be so far from seeing reason to perpetuate our distance and animosities, that we should on the contrary, be seized with wonder and indignation, that we have hitherto been imposed upon so far, as to take those things for great deformities, which upon mature consideration are really nothing worse than Moles, which may be upon the most beautiful face.

To this purpose therefore, having in the former Chapter represented the nature of Schism, and the guilt and mischiefs attending it, I proceed now to shew the unreasonableness of the temptations to it, I mean the littleness and small importance of the Objections against this Church; and that neither any of them single, nor all of them together can countervail the blessing of Peace or the evil of Division.

In order hereto, I will first shew that the causes of Dissentions amongst us are not like those upon which we separated from the *Roman* Communion. 2. That something must be given for Peace by them that will have it.

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it. 3. That all the scruples and objections against this Church, are not too great a price to pay for it.

1. Touching the first, it is said by some in heat and passion, That there is as much cause for secession from this Church now, as there was from the *Roman* in the time of our Ancestors: but with no more reason, than if the arguments and discourses written against a notorious Tyrant and Usurper, should be turned against a good and lawful Prince. As will easily be manifest if we consider the just state of the case on either hand.

We could not continue in the *Roman* Church upon any better conditions than *Nabash* propounded to the men of *Jabesh Gilead*, 1 *Sam.* 11. to put out our right Eyes that we might be fit for her *blind devotion*. We must for the sake of Peace have denyed the Faith, renounced our Reason, and contradicted our very Senses. That Church instead of instructing men in knowledge, professes to nurse them up in ignorance; in lieu of the Scriptures, it gives them Traditions, and instead of such things as were from the beginning, and the faith once delivered to the Saints,

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it prescribes those things that had their beginning from private interests and secular advantages.

They make seven Sacraments, five more than Christ ever intended for such, and take away from the people the half of one of those he expressly instituted and enjoined. They teach men to pray to Saints instead of God, and to use a Language in their Devotions which he that pronounces, understands no more than the Saint, he prays to, doth his Needs and Requests. Nay, they give divine honour to a piece of Bread, and must swallow Idolatry in spite of their teeth; herein little better than the *Aegyptians* who worshipt that for a God which they put into their Bellies. They have taken away one of the Ten Commandments and have arts of evacuating all the rest, for they elude the necessity of a true and serious Repentance, and subvert the principles of holy Life. In short, they have brought in Pageantry instead of Piety and Devotion, effaced the true lineaments of Christianity, and instead thereof recommended and obtruded upon the world the dictates of Ambition, the artifices of Gain, and a colluvies of almost all the Superstitions, Errors and Corruptions of former Ages, and this must be received and

swallowed by all those that will continue in that Communion.

These things could not be submitted to without grievous Sin and manifest danger of Damnation; therefore there was just ground for our Recession: for, as I said, it could not be sin to depart when it was so to continue. And it is a very reasonable choice rather to be *condemned* by them of Singularity, than to be *damned* for Company.

But now it is quite otherwise in the Church of *England*. No man here parts with his Faith upon his Conformity, no man is bound to give away his Reason and common Sense for quietness sake. No man needs to hazard the Peace of a good and well instructed Conscience, for the Peace of the Church. No man is tempted to renounce his Integrity, but may be as good and holy a man as he will, and the more of that the better Church-man. This Church keeps none of her Children in an uncomfortable estate of darkness, but teaches the true knowledge of God and Christ sincerely and very advantageously. She hath no half Communion, nor debars any of her members of the priviledge and comfort of Christs Institutions. She recommends the same Faith

Faith and the same Scriptures that all Protestants are agreed in. The same God, and only he, is worshipped, the same rules of holy Life are propounded, as well as the same hopes and happiness expected.

By this brief representation the difference between the Church of *Rome* and the Protestants, appears so wide and vast, that they agree neither in their *Creed*, nor *Object of worship*, nor *Sacraments*, nor *Rules of Life*. On the other side, the agreements of Protestants with the Church of *England* is so full and perfect, that they have not only the *same God and Christ*, but the *same object of worship*, the *same way of Devotion* in a known Tongue, the *same Sacraments* and *same rule of Life*, which certainly are all the great things that the Consciences of men are concerned in.

A man might therefore justly wonder, (these things being so) what should make a breach, and what place there is for contention; or what can remain considerable enough to occasion the dissatisfaction, to provoke the animosity, to countenance that distance that is between us. And I verily believe it would be hard for a stranger to this Church and Nation, that understood the state of the case

thus far to guess what should be the bone of contention amongst us.

I will now as well as I can both faithfully and briefly recite the matters of difference. And I must needs confess, if we *number* them only, they are many; But if we *weigh* them (not only against the things we are agreed in, but against peace and agreement it self) I perswade my self they will be very light. But that I must leave to the judgement of the Reader. The things themselves are these and such as these.

Whether such Prayers shall make up the body of the publick Liturgy, as have been conceived by the Governours of the Church, and used ever since the Reformation; or such as shall *pro re nata* be occasionally indited by every private Minister?

Or, which perhaps is much the same, whether such words, expressions and phrases shall be continued in the publick Service, as are by long use grown familiar to, and intelligible by vulgar people, or such shall come in their room, as are more modern and grateful to nicer Ears?

About the several postures of Standing,
Kneeling,

Kneeling and Sitting ; and whether some one of these be more decorous and accommodate to some part of Gods Worship than another, and which to which ?

About observation of Dayes and Times ; as whether the Anniversaries of the Birth, Death and Resurrection of our Saviour and other great passages of the Gospel be of use, and fit to be observed ? And whether some special Time of Abstinence and Mortification in conformity to the Primitive Church, may now be retained or not ?

About Habits and Garments, such as Gown, Surplice, &c. whether the habit used in ministration in the time of King *Edward*, be not now as Lawful as any other ?

About the Ceremony of the Cross in Baptism, whether (whilest it is declared not essential to Baptism) it may not upon other considerations be used in that Sacrament ?

Or lastly, whether Subordination of the Clergy in the Episcopal way, or Co-ordination and Parity in the Presbyterian, be rather to be preferred ?

Most of the Disputes we have amongst us, are either upon these questions, or reducible to these, or at least of like nature with these. Now how inconsiderable these things are in themselves, and how fit to be made a Sacrifice to Peace, I forbear to say, till I have in the second place shewn, as I promised, that something must be forgon for it.

2. It was a worthy and memorable saying of *Erasmus*, *Mihi sanè adeò inuisa est discordia, ut veritas etiam displiceat seditiosa*. He did not only suspect that Proposition was not true, that was not also peaceable, but he thought Peace not too dear at the price of some Truth. And he that pretends so high a value for the latter, as we have no esteem for the former, neither understands the one nor the other.

Greg. Nazianz. puts this Question, *ή τῶ ἡμετέρῳ λόγῳ κάλλιστον*; and answers, *εἰρήνη, περὶ δῆσω ὃ ὅτι καὶ λυσιτελέσῃ*, That peace is not only the most beautiful flower in the Garden of Christianity, but also the most sovereign and useful. Though it be commonly dealt with as some famed beauty, admired and courted, but not espoused.

The Apostle, when *Rom. 12. 18.* he so passionately exhorts, *If it be possible, and as far as in you lyes, have peace with all men,* surely did not mean, that we should only accept of Peace when it is offered us for nothing, or be quiet till we can pick a quarrel; but that we should be at some cost to purchase it, and part with something for it, and deny our selves something which (but upon that account) we might lawfully have enjoyed.

It is true we may buy Gold too dear, and so we must have done our Peace, if we sought it at the hands of those Hucksters of the Church of *Rome*, as I shewed before. But that we cannot reasonably expect it for nothing in any Society in the World, I think is demonstratively evident by this one consideration, That there are scarcely any intellectual *Menachmi*, I mean hardly any two persons perfectly of the same apprehension or stature of understanding in the whole world. So much difference there is in mens Constitutions, such diversity of Education, such variety of Interests and Customs, and from hence so many kinds of Prejudices and various Conceptions of things, that he that resolves to yield to no body, can agree with
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no body, and consequently cannot be happy in any Church or Society on this side of Heaven. There indeed some think mens minds shall be all of one capacity, but whatever be the truth in that particular, I much doubt, whether those persons will ever make up that Society of the Church Triumphant, that think themselves bound to disturb the state of the Church Militant, unless all things fall in with their own humour. For every peaceable man sees he must either go out of the world, or set it all in flames if he will not subdue his own passion, and castigate his heat; That he must suffer shipwreck in the tempestuous Seas of dispute and contentions, if he will not, both take in his sails, and lighten the Ship by casting overboard the fardles of his private phancies and opinions. He that will require all other men should assent to what he thinks, and will conceal nothing he is perswaded of, and yet expect to live in peace, must either have very little wit or extraordinary fortune. And he that will bear nothing that God hath not expressly imposed upon him, nor part with any thing he may lawfully keep, nor offer any Sacrifice to those touchy Deities, received Custome and vulgar Opinion, must expect often to feel the effects of their rage and power. In summ, he that will
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sacrifice nothing to publick tranquillity, must be sure to live in perpetual flames here, whatsoever become of him hereafter.

The Apostle was not, certainly, of this stubborn humour, who declares of himself that he *became all things to all men, that he might gain some. To the Jews he became as a Jew, to gain the Jews; to them that were without Law, as without Law; to them that were weak he became as weak too,* 1 Cor. 1. 20. He was no longer a starchy inflexible Pharisee, but a complaisant Christian, as some perhaps would have called him, a Latitudinarian Apostle.

When a whole Council of the Apostles at *Jerusalem, Acts 15.* (which is a passage I have often occasion to mention, and well deserves to be studied by every peaceable Christian) when I say they decreed that the Gentiles should *abstain from things strangled and from blood,* they deprived them of a great part of their Christian Liberty meerly to conciliate the Jews to them, and required that to be done for peace, that no Law of God otherwise required at their hands.

St. Gregory Nazianzen affirms of St. Basil that he dissembled the Coessentiality of the Holy

Holy Spirit, and delivered himself in ambiguous terms on that great point, lest he should offend and lose the weak; which neither would that holy man have done, nor much less his especial Friend and admirer have told of him, if either of them had thought it to have been too great a price for the purchase.

But we need no other, and can have no greater, instance in this case than our Saviour himself, who when he came into the world complied with the Rites and Customs he found, and condescended to the very humours of that stubborn people amongst whom he was; he used their phrase in all his discourses; he observed their Feasts, he made his own institutions of Baptism and the Lords Supper as consonant to their Customs as it was possible; to the end that he might not disturb them with Novelty, but ingratiate himself and his Doctrine by these compliances. When a certain Tribute was demanded of him, he first proves that he was not obliged to pay it, yet lest he should offend them, determines to pay it, and works a Miracle to inable *Peter* to do it, *Mat. 17. 27.*

What shall we say to all this? Are these Instances only to trace out an example of
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condescension in Magistrates and Governours to their Inferiours? or are they not most certainly as Land-marks to all of what degree or condition soever to direct them how to steer their course, and behave themselves in order to Peace?

Let me appeal to the Consciences of men, Is it not plain from hence, that although I be perswaded such a certain Rite is less commendable in it self, yet if it appear to be an instrument of Accommodation, that it is therefore in that case best upon that account? And that such things as are indifferent, or have no essential goodness of their own, become not indifferent but good, as they are useful or necessary to that end? Or if I am perswaded, that such an opinion is more true than that which is publicly received (so long as the main Doctrine of Christianity is not in dispute) I may not for all this conceal it, rather than disturb the Church? This was the counsel of the famous *Constantine* for the preventing and silencing disputes at the Council of *Nice*, though the things in controversie there, were of a higher nature than ours are. But if any man be not satisfied with the Judgement of so great and good a Prince, let him go and learn what that of *St. Paul*, *Rom. 14. 22.* means, *Hast thou*

V. Euseb. in
vita Con-
stant. lib. 2.
cap. 67 &
68.

thou faith? have it to thy self, and that before God. I suppose no body will imagine that by *Faith* in this Text the Apostle means the Doctrine of Christianity; for then the sense should be, that he that understands and is instructed in the great Doctrine of the Gospel, should conceal it; which is as far from the mind of the Apostle as from the duty of a Christian: Much less can it be conceived that by *Faith* he should mean the grace or habit of saving faith; as if the Apostle should advise them neither to confess with their mouths nor express in their works what they are perswaded of in their hearts: Either of these would be to encourage *Gnosticism* which he every where detests. By *Faith* therefore he must mean only a perswasion of the lawfulness of some thing indifferent in it self, such as those matters he had been discoursing of, (*viz.*) the eating of certain meats and observing of certain dayes; And then his advice is plainly this and no more, That a man should not disturb or offend others with his private opinions (how true soever) in things of an inferiour nature, but content himself to enjoy his own sence, between God and his own Conscience; neither disturbing publick order, nor tempting weak Consciences there with.

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In short therefore, it will be no hypocritical tergiversation, no wrong either to our Religion or to our Consciences, if when the case shall so require, we change any phrase of speech, how fit soever in our apprehension, for one less fit, but more acceptable and current; any Rite or Ceremony that we have a great kindness for, for one more grateful to others; and that we may comply with the Laws in being, so they be not palpably contrary to the Scriptures or common Reason, though we think better might be made in their room. And that according to the saying of the Lord *Bacon*, *we may take counsel of the elder times what is best, but of the present times, for what is fittest.* And in a word, that we part with all that which is no essential point of our Religion, for Charity, which is.

3. Let us now for a Conclusion of this Chapter reflect back upon the aforementioned Catalogue of things in difference, and see if they will not all appear to be of such a nature as we have hitherto supposed them, that is, such as may be fit to become a Peace-offering, and sacrificed to the Magistrate, the Laws and the Church. And that we shall be easily able to resolve of, by the help

help of these five following Remarques.

1. That the things now scrupled in this Church are such as were heretofore submitted to by the most Leading men of those that now hereupon depart from it ; and if those things were in themselves lawful then, they cannot change their nature by time, and become unlawful now. It will not be replied, That then they made no Conscience of what they did, lest it should be suspected they do but pretend it now ; for he that confesses a guilt of the same kind, strengthens the suspicion of that whereof he is accused. But if it be said, they did it Ignorantly then, and now having more light, cannot outface it : To this it will be as easie to answer, That the engagements of Interest and Prejudice are as lyable to be suspected now, as Ignorance heretofore ; especially if we consider, that there was no appearance of any extraordinary light breaking in, when our troubles and divisions broke out, but as soon as opportunity offered, and occasion invited, that is, when Laws were laid asleep, and Authority taken up with other cares, then presently without further deliberation, all these objections start up, and new Models set up for themselves, which if they had been the effect of light and knowledge must have proceeded

ceeded gradually in proportion to that, and increased by time and deliberation; but this is so far from being the case, that it is scarce (if at all) possible to find any objection against the Church that is not much elder than he that makes it.

2. Thanks be to God, some Non-conformists daily come over to the Church, and those not of the meanest Character for ability or piety; but let them bragg of any one if they can find him, that hath since the re-settlement of the Church at His Majesties Restauration apostatized to them.

Now they must be horribly uncharitable that can conclude, either all those that continue in the Church Ignorant, or those that return to it Hypocritical; and if they do not judge so, they confess the matters in difference to be not certainly evil, but that prejudice hath made them seem so.

3. That there are men of as clear Understanding, as good Life and as comfortable Consciences in the Society of this Church as are any where else to be found; and if so (which Impudence it self hath not the face to deny) then there is no capital error in its constitution, since those three answer to the

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whole design of Christianity, and it can never be, that there should be danger that neither troubles the Conscience with fears, nor displayes it self in a bad Life, nor is discoverable by an honest heart and sound understanding.

4. The things objected against this Church are but at most disputable matters, because all wise and good men are not agreed upon them. But that which is *sub judice*, and yet under dispute cannot be called *Evil* till the dispute is ended, and the decision made against it. And those men have but little value for peace, that will depart from it before they are sure that truth is on the other side.

5. And lastly, the things scrupled in this Church, are such as the like may be found and complained of in any Church of the whole world, at least since the Apostles times. And of this no man can doubt, but he that hath prepared himself to be a bold Dogmatist and confident Assertor, by abandoning himself to so supine a negligence, as neither to understand the History of the Church of former Ages, nor the present state of it in other Countreys. For if the Controversie were brought to this Issue, I durst give
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the Non-conformist leave to choose what National Church he will, and of what age he will, and I will undertake to make as many and as rational exceptions against that Church whatsoever it be (if we have the History and knowledge of it as we have of this) as he hath or can make against the Church of *England*.

Now if these things be true, as I am confident they will appear upon impartial consideration, then are the matters of our difference such as I have supposed, namely, of no greater value, than that we may forgo our private opinion, phancy and custome in and concerning them, for the Peace of the Church. And if we resolve not to unite our selves to the Church whilst there is any thing of this nature to discontent us, it is too much to be feared that Peace will for ever be hid from our eyes. But to prevent that, let me here prevent my self in one thing that will fall in more opportunely hereafter, *viz.* That since there is no grand matter of Religion concerned in the Controversies between us, nor any violation of the Laws of God in our complying with the Laws of this Society, and since either *Mahomet* must go to the Mountain or the Mountain must come to *Mahomet*, *i. e.* one side or other must yield,

we will be perswaded to think it reasonable, that the Subject should submit to the Governour, and Opinion give place to ancient Custome, and Novelty to the Laws in being.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

That those that find fault with the Constitution of this Church, will never be able to find out or agree upon a better.

IT was seasonable advice which a Member of the Long Parliament is said to have propounded then when all were for pulling down, and Desolation was called Reformation ; *That they should do well to let the old Building stand till they had Materials in readiness, and were agreed upon a model of a Fabrick to be set up in the stead of what they destroyed.* And not unlike was the Gloss of the Lord Bacon upon the words of the Prophet Jeremy, Chap. 6. 16. *Stand upon the wayes and inquire for the good way, &c.* that is, saith he, *Inquire for a better way, but stand upon the old wayes till you have discovered it.* And agreeably Mr. Selden, *Accuratius circumspicienda via omnes, de semitis antiquis consulendum, quæ vero sit optima seligenda.* And these sayings are not

more valuable for their weight or elegancy, nor for the reputation of their Authors, than considerable in our case. We confess generally the old way of the Church of *England* to be right for the main, but certain Circumstantials are uneasy to some of us, and they, till those are redrest, will proceed no further. But it's reasonable then we should be able to agree upon and produce a better Model, lest instead of having a new Church, we have no Church at all.

For, First, It can never be thought by wise men that such a Society as a Church, can be conserved without some Rites or other, forasmuch as no petty Corporation or Company can; nor that God can be worshipped without all Circumstance, at least by men, that have Bodies and are bound *to glorifie him with their Bodies as well as Souls.*

2. It is as plain, that neither any Society can continue, nor any publick Worship be performed, if all Ceremonies and circumstances, such as of time, place, persons and the like, be left indefinite and undetermined; for who shall know whom to obey, whom to hear, where to assemble, or when to meet, if these be not defined?

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3. If therefore there must be some determination in Circumstantials, it must be made either by God or Man ; And whether God hath made any such determination in the case we will now consider ; and the rather because this is made a popular Theme to declaim upon against the Church, and *jus divinum* is boldly instamped upon those Models that have been designed to supplant it.

Indeed in the Old Testament, so far as concerned the Temple at *Jerusalem* and the Worship there to be performed, God was very particular in his directions. And we (blind as we are) may discern plain reason for so doing ; because both the one and the other, I mean the Temple and the Worship to be performed thereat, were Mystical and Figurative, and designed by Typical representations to lead that people into some apprehension of those things that were not then plainly revealed, but were afterwards to be exhibited in the times of the Gospel. Now if it had been lawful for the *Jews* to have innovated or made alterations in those things whereof they understood not the reasons, they must of necessity have mis-guided themselves, and God had lost the principal end of those institutions. For since (as I

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said) they had no sufficient and clear knowledge of the things typified, the change in the Rites, (which people (so in the dark) were likely to make,) must of necessity have led them further beside the mark God aimed at ; as a Copy the more removes it is from the Original draught, is likely to have less of the Life : and so the effect would have been, that by those alterations they would not have left themselves so much as the shadow, to guide them to the knowledge of the substance or body.

But in their Synagogue Worship it is very observable, that they had no such limits set them, nor no such punctual directions given them by Divine Revelation, but were wholly Governed by Prudence and the general reasons of Religion ; insomuch that neither the very building of Synagogues, nor any part of the Worship there performed, had any Divine Law concerning it, in all the Old Testament, nor indeed was it needful there should, here being nothing Symbolical (as in the former) but natural Religion, which the notions they had of God, and the common sense of Mankind was sufficient to guide them in. Or at least, if those common Rules should fall short in any respect, yet by any error of that kind, they could not deprive

prive themselves of any farther advantage or discovery God intended them, as in the Temple worship they might.

Now thus it is in the Gospel; The Christian Religion being a plain, easie, intelligible and rational way of serving God, it was not necessary that our Saviour or his Apostles should curiously order, or minutely describe what Rites and Circumstances should be used in it, but might safely enough leave those to prudence and expediency; the general reason of so plain and natural a Religion, being sufficient to secure the Church against any capital mistake. And therefore he that reads the Gospel without coloured Spectacles, will find that our Saviour made it his business to expound the Law, to vindicate it from the corrupt glosses of the *Jews*, to prescribe men the Rules of true Holiness and Righteousness, to raise them to a noble and generous pitch, and set them an excellent Copy of the Divine Life, and to encourage their endeavours after it, by revealing and demonstrating the Judgement to come, and the rewards in another world; and never went about the composure of Laws either of Civil or Ecclesiastical Policy. And for his Apostles, they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, and gave certain directions
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suit'd to the conditions of the times and places and people respectively, but never compos'd a standing Ritual for all after-times; which will be put beyond all dispute by this one Observation, That several things instituted by the Apostles in the Primitive Churches, and given in command in their Sacred Writings, their Epistles, were intended and so construed to be obliging only so long as circumstances should stand as then they did, and no longer. Of this nature were the *Feasts of Love, the Holy Kifs, the Order of Deaconesses*; which things with several other, are no where, that I know of, now observed, nor is any man scrupled about the abrogation of them. Which is a plain evidence, that the generality of Christians (where passion and prejudice do not mis-guide them) acknowledge it to have been no design of the Apostles to have strictly obliged men to a certain form of Rituals.

But besides all this, the Religion God instituted amongst the *Jews*, was only fitted to that people, and appropriate to that place and Countrey, and intended to oblige no body else. It was contriv'd on purpose to distinguish them from all other people in the world, and therefore is called by the Apostle *the middle wall of partition*,
Eph.

Eph. 2. 14. And to the end that such separation and distance might last, the boundaries of their Rituals must be immoveable. But the Christian Religion was to throw down all Inclosures, to unite all the world under one Head, and make of all Nations one people, and therefore must be left with that freedom as to Circumstantials, as that all Nations, notwithstanding their several Limits, divers Customs and Forms of Government, might be capable of receiving it. For as our Saviour tells us, *his Kingdom was not of this world*, so he never intended that his Religion should alter the Bounds, or change the Customes, or disturb the Governments of people; but only principle the hearts of men with true holiness and goodness, and so leave them to their distinct Policies. And indeed it was one of the singular advantages of the Christian Religion, and that which made it fit to be the Catholick Religion (that is, of all times, Countreys and people) That the external Policy of it being undetermined, it reconciled it self to the condition and state of things where it came, as well as recommended it self to the minds of men by its reasonableness and goodness. Hereto agrees the known saying of *Optatus Millevitanus*, *Respublica non est in Ecclesia, sed Ecclesia est in Republica*, That the Church being contained

tained in the Civil Society, conforms it self (as to Externals) to that which contains it.

Upon all which it is exceedingly evident, That it is very unreasonable to expect, that every Ceremony made use of by Christians should be found prescribed in the Scripture or proved thence, and therefore those that expect to find such definitions in the New Testament, do (as they do too often in other cases, as I have noted heretofore) bring an Old Testament Spirit to the writings of the New, and Jewish prejudices to the Christian Doctrine. And those that can be so fond as to perswade themselves they can find such prescriptions there, it is hard to say whether humour or weakness doth more betray it self in such pretence; for they catch hold of such weak twigs as no body would do, but in desperation of other help, and they plead such obscure passages, as it is a wonder if prejudice it self can be contented with them. And in short, they can as little agree amongst *themselves* either in the proofs or the things to be proved, as they do with *us*.

4. If then there must be some determination of Circumstances or no Society, and God hath made no such determination, what remains,

remains, but that men must? And then who fitter than our Governours who best understand the Civil Policy, and what will suit therewith, and with the customs and inclinations of the people under their Charge? And when such determination is made, what should hinder us from obedience and conformity thereto, especially when the particulars so determined, (as they are not enjoyned by Scripture, so) are not contrary to it, or forbidden by it?

I conclude therefore, Whosoever shall go about to disturb a settled Order, concluded on by good and wise men, revered and admired by others, incorporated into the Laws of the Land, rivetted by Custome, and that hath now given proof of it self by above an hundred years experience, for the sake of new and unpracticable Notions, shall little consult the real advantage of the present Generation, and less their own reputation for discretion with Posterity.

This occasion brings to my mind, the famous Story of *Pacuvius Calavius of Capua*: The people were all in a rage against their Senate; and would needs in a hurry have them all deposed, and have used other outrages to their persons. This wise Plebeian
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shuts up the Senators all together, and puts a Guard upon them, and then coming to the people, tells them, all was in their power now, advises them to determine their several fates according to their demerits one by one. This they very readily hearkened to. But as they past a Doom upon any one, he approves the Sentence, but before the execution perswades them, to bethink themselves of another and better man to be in his Room, since a Senate they could not be without. But here the business stuck, as he had foreseen it would, the people who agreed unanimously against the old Senator, could by no means accord who should succeed, one named this person and another that, but whosoever was named by one party was rejected by another; that in conclusion, as great a pique as they had conceived against the old Senate, for want of agreement in better men to fill their places, they were constrained to continue them in. I only make this application of the Story, That it is easie and obvious to find fault with things present, but not so to find better for the future. And till that can be done, 'tis neither just to call any thing evil that is the best of its kind, nor done like wise men, to quarrel with a Church
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for some infirmities which we know the worst of by long experience; lest thereby we come to have either none at all, or such an one as may give us cause sadly to repent our choice.

CHAP.

/ CHAP. V.

That God laies very little stress upon Circumstantials in Religion.

TO make that which we have hitherto discoursed the more clear and convictive, and to ease the minds of men of their scrupulosities and superstitious fears, let it be considered in the next place, That even then when God Almighty did with the most punctuality prescribe the Ceremonies and Circumstantials of Religion, he never laid such stress upon them, but that so long as the main of Religion was provided for, and the substance of his Institutions observed, Alterations might be and were made in those lesser matters without his offence.

And if this be made appear, it will tend to beget in men better notions of God, and better measures of Religion, as well as dispose them to Conformity to the Church of England. For they will have no reason then

to think of God as a captious Deity that watches advantages against his Creatures, nor make Religion a piece of nice scrupulosity, and consequently will neither swallow Camels, nor strain at Gnats, but serve God with the generosity of a free and a comfortable mind.

Now to this purpose it will not be un-
 useful, to take notice of a distinction men-
 tioned by *Maimonides*, "That the Jews ac-
 knowledge some things in their Law to
 be *prima intentionis*, and some things
secunda; That there were some things
 God required for themselves as being in-
 trinsically good, and that other things were
 only required for the sake of, and in or-
 der to, the former. The first kind that
 were *essentially good*, were also *absolutely*
necessary, and never could be otherwise,
 such as we call *moral Duties*. The latter
 kind were of so indifferent a nature, as that
 not only they might *not have been command-*
ed, but also having been commanded, they
 may in some cases *not be a Duty*; An in-
 stance whereof (though the Jews were a
 great while before they understood it, and
 soundly smarted for their Ignorance) is that
 Maxim they have now generally received,
Periculum vite dissolvit Sabbathum. But

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the fullest instance of the kind, is that which is remembred by Mr. *Selden* in his Book *de jure Naturali Gentium*, lib. 2. cap. 10. "That in case of sickness a few might not only eat such meats as were otherwise forbidden, but (say they) for the recovery of his health, or avoidance of any great danger, he might break any Precept, save only those three great ones against Idolatry, Murder and Incest.

But these things come not home to my purpose, only I note them, to shew that that superstitious people had some general notice, that God did not so precisely animadvert in little matters, so the great were minded.

That which I choose to insist upon for the evidencing of this Observation, is the *Passover*, which was a great Sacrament instituted by God himself upon weighty reasons, made a Statute for ever throughout their generations, and the soul that observed it not was to be cut off from among his people, *Exod.* 12. And in the eleventh verse of that Chapter the most minute circumstances are defined, amongst other that they should eat the *Passover* with staves in their hands, shoes on their feet, and their loins girt; by which expressions is plainly intimated (and accordingly

accordingly they understood and practised) that they should eat it in the posture of standing.

Nevertheless it is well known, that when they were come into the Land of *Canaan* to settled habitations, they ate it sitting or lying according to the usual custome of feasting in those Countreys. And this change continued all along till the times of our Saviour, without any reproof from God, and our Saviour himself conforms to them herein, and in the same posture eats the Passeeover with his Disciples.

Now this is the rather observable, because whenas the posture enjoined by God, was symbolical of the haste in which they went out of *Egypt*, They in the change aforesaid instituted a Ceremony which was symbolical too, but quite of another matter; namely, of the rest and peace God had now given them in the good Land of *Canaan*. And all this alteration made upon prudential considerations, and the reason of the thing, without any warrant from God for their direction, or check for the change.

Let us take another Instance ; Though God had so carefully described the circumstances

1 Chron.
23. 5, 6.

stances of the *Temple-worship* (as I have shewed before, and the especial reasons of so doing) yet we find *David* distributing the Priests into Orders for the conveniency of their Ministration, which might have been called an Innovation in Religion : but besides that, he instituted instrumental Musick to be used in the Worship of God without any Commission from God (that appears.) And yet this novelty also was so far from incurring any reprehension, that it was thenceforward constantly retained and made use of.

I might for the fuller Evidence of this notion observe, That though God had with great solemnity instituted *Sacrifices* as the means of propitiating his Divine Majesty towards sinful men, and had with great accuracy prescribed the Laws thereof, yet he puts a great slight upon all of that nature, as a thing he regarded not in comparison with the substantial points of Virtue and Obedience. Particularly, *Psal. 50. ver. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, &c. v. 14. Offer to God the sacrifices of righteousness.* As if he had said, let me have these latter, and I shall not much complain for defect of the former. But especially *Micah 6. 7. will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or*

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ten thousands of rivers of Oyl, &c. but he hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God? For a full explication of all which and several other passages of Scripture to the same purpose, that Aphorism so frequently made use of by our Saviour upon several occasions will be very considerable, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* Particularly *Matth. 12.* when the Pharisees who were mighty curious of little things; censured the Disciples of our Lord for violating the Sabbath in their rubbing the Ears of Corn as they went through the Fields and were hungry on that day, our Saviour answers, *That David did also break one of the Ceremonial Precepts in eating the Shewbread,* and ver. 7. tells them, *If they had known what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, they would not have condemned the innocent.* Where though it be sure enough, that God did not repeal his Law of Sacrificing by enjoyning Mercy, yet it is sufficiently intimated, that God doth not only prefer Moral acts before Ceremonial, but also doth make great allowances, limitations and exceptions in the one case and not in the other. For it is as if our Saviour had said, *Had you Censorious Pharisees, understood ei-*

ther God or Religion as ye might and ought to have done, ye would have known that so long as there is not contumacy and contempt in the neglect of those rituals, but the excuse of a just necessity, or the rational consideration of a greater good to preponderate the omission, God doth not impute it for a sin.

And if this was the case and condition of things in the Old Testament, where God seemed so punctual in his Prescriptions, so rigorous in his Animadversions, and where the danger of erring capitally from the design of those institutions, by the least deviation from the line of Divine Revelation, was so great, as I have shewed before; Then certainly in the New Testament, where the Divine Wisdom hath exprest far less concern for such little points, may the minds of men be secure from such superstitious fears.

But I will give one Instance out of the New Testament also. When Circumcision was abolished (the distinction betwixt Jew and Gentile being taken away) and all Believers become the children of Abraham) And when the Apostle St. Paul had vehemently declaimed against the necessity, and proclaimed the danger of Circumcision, as is obvious to any one that reads his Epistles; yet this
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same Apostle, *Acts 16. 1.* circumcises *Timothy*, to the intent that thereby he might render himself and his Ministry more acceptable to the *Jews*. In which carriage of his he hath beyond all exception, demonstrated to us; that all Ceremonial appendages are perfectly subordinate, and ought to yield to the designs of Peace, Charity and Edification, as the greater good.

I will conclude this Point with what the Apostle concludes his Discourse about eating or not eating of meats sacrificed to Idols, *Rom. 14.* which created as much dispute and scruple amongst weak Christians then, as Ceremonies do now. *V. 17.* he sayes, *The Kingdom of God*, that is, the Gospel, *is not meat and drink*, that is, consists not or layes little stress upon those nice and perplexing matters, *but in righteousness, peace and joy*: all the weight is laid upon the more substantial observances of a righteous and holy life, and a peaceable spirit and conversation. And adds a proof, *v. 18.* *For he that in these things serveth Christ is approved of God and accepted of men.*

CHAP. VI.

That the Magistrate hath Authority to determine such Externals of Religion as are the matters of our disputes, and what deportment is due from Christians towards him.

HAVING shewed in the former Chapters, That God hath neither made any exact definition of Religious Circumstances, nor is very curious about them; further than to secure the great things of Christianity; It follows, that then either those lesser must be determined by men, or not at all. It will therefore now be seasonable to inquire what Authority and Interest the Magistrate hath in this affair.

And although there want not those that (Chamelion like) live upon the air of vulgar applause, and get themselves a reputation of extraordinary zeal by daring to censure the actions, and asperse the persons of Magistrates,

strates, and with such persons, he that shall vindicate the just Rights and Authority of his Superiours, shall hardly escape the reproach of flattery and time-serving; yet being conscious both of the truth and importance of what I am to say, and of the sincerity of my intentions in so doing, I will deliver my self freely in these two points.

1. That the Magistrate exceeds not his Commission when he interposes for the determination of the Circumstantials of Religion.

2. That common Prudence, Christian Charity and Humility do all require of us to presume of the wisdom and reasonableness of such his determinations. The result of which two things will be, that it is much more our duty peaceably to comply with and obey them.

1. The former of these hath been so fully and substantially proved by the incomparable *Hugo Grotius* in a just discourse, and by a late eminent Divine of this Church, that it is enough to refer the Reader to them; yet because some person may perhaps read these Papers, that will not take the pains, or hath
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not opportunity to read those larger Discourses (that yet would better compensate his labour) I will therefore say these three things.

1. It is certain, the Magistrate had once a power in the Circumstantial of Religion, and that in the Old Testament. *David* (as I have shewed before) altered some things and instituted others even in the Temple-service it self. *Hezekiah* without a Scripture for it, broke the brazen Serpent to pieces, though it was a symbolical Ceremony of Gods own institution.

2 Ki. 18. 4.

But besides this, he caused the Passover to be kept by all *Judah* and *Israel* on the second Moneth, though it was not according to divine institution, but done by the advice of his Council upon pious and prudential considerations, 2 *Chron.* 30. 5. It is true indeed, *Numb.* 9. upon appeal to God in a special case, he was pleased to declare that such private persons as should either be in a journey at the set time of the Passover in the first Moneth, or should otherwise by uncleanness be incapable of observing the Passover with all the Congregation of *Israel* in the time thereof, such persons should have leave to observe it on the second Moneth: But this was not a Law for all *Israel*, but as I said a special

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Chap. 6. *Compassionate Enquiry, &c.* 165

indulgence to some particular persons. What course should be taken if the whole Congregation should happen to neglect the just season of doing it, was not provided for by any Law ; Therefore this religious Prince *Hezekiah* upon prudential considerations, not without some light from that special provision, determines the case.

He appointed also the Levites to kill the Passover, *v.* 17. which by Gods appointment was to have been performed by the people themselves. And *Chap.* 29. *v.* 34. he prefers the Levites to assist the Priests in killing the other Sacrifices, which never before they were admitted to.

Many other instances might be brought out of the Old Testament to this purpose, but these sufficiently make it appear, that the best Princes did not think they exceeded their own bounds, or intrenched upon God, when they prudently ordered such particulars ; and they are so far from having any blot laid upon their memories for these things, that they are recorded to their immortal honour.

Now since Magistrates had once such a power, how came they to lose it, or be divested

vested of it? Is it that God is more curious and jealous of every punctilio in his Worship now, than he was heretofore? That would be the most absurd supposition in the world, as we have sufficiently demonstrated. And he that without evident proof shall go about to deny them what Christianity found them in possession of, shall do very bad offices to the Religion he pretends such zeal for. For it would be a small encouragement to Princes to entertain and countenance the Christian Religion, if it was told them, That the power which God had allowed them in the Old Testament, was now found too exorbitant, and therefore he had retrencht it in the Gospel. Would it not mightily move Kings and Princes to become *nursing fathers* to the Church to hear this Doctrine preached to them?

2. The New Testament is frequent in asserting the power of Princes and Magistrates, and requires all to be subject to them and obey them of what quality or condition soever, and no where excepts the case of Religion; therefore undoubtedly that is under their power, (so far I mean as Circumstantials and those things that God himself hath not defined.) For when God hath made them a general commission and made no exception
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of this kind, who shall put it upon them? If they have not power in such matters of Religion as we speak of, it's manifest they have no Magistracy or Legislative power in Religion at all. And then one would have expected the Text should not have run absolutely and in general terms, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*, but with this limitation, in things Civil only; or at least that some other Scripture should have as plainly restrained them, as this and other impowers them. Which since it is no where done, we wrong both our selves and them, to abridge them herein. Besides that, when our Saviour tells us, *His Kingdom is not of this world*, he sufficiently intimates, that it was neither necessary that he should, and that consequently he had no intention to alter the forms of Government, or revoke the Authority Governours were in possession of.

3. It is generally acknowledged (and accordingly practised) that Fathers and Governours of Families have authority in matters of Religion within their own Families, at least so far as the case in hand. Who doubts but the Father or Head of a Family may prescribe what Chapters shall be read, what Prayers used, what Times shall be set apart for

for Devotion, what Postures, whether kneeling or standing, and being uncovered, who shall officiate in his Family, and in what Habit, with innumerable others of a like nature? Do the children or servants use to require of him an express Scripture to authorize his Commands, and to warrant their Conformity, or else they will not obey?

And if he in his private capacity and narrow sphere hath this Authority, with what colour of Reason, or with what Modesty, can every private man deny his Prince what he arrogates to himself? One would reasonably think, that as Civil Government arose out of Paternal, it should by inheritance challenge that Authority it was born to; and besides that, as it hath a larger sphere and a greater concern, so it should have due to it proportionably a greater latitude of Authority.

2. Secondly, If the Magistrate may determine those matters, then not only Christian Charity and Humility, but also common Prudence require us to presume of the Wisdom and Reasonableness of his Determinations, and much more to obey them.

It is enough to warrant and require our Obe-

Obedience, that a thing is the command of our Superiour, and not beyond the sphere of his Authority; but if he have not only Law but Reason on his side too, then it is both a sin and a shame to disobey. Now Humility requiring that we think meanly and modestly of our own Reasons, Charity that we judge favourably of anothers, and Prudence that we think best of the Magistrates; all these together make it our duty not only to obey, but to do it with all chearfulness imaginable.

It is as great as it is a common mistake, to think Charity and Compassion only due from Governours to their Inferiours in the frame and compofure of their Laws; for it is also as due from Inferiours towards them, and that they reciprocally make a fair and candid interpretation of their Injunctions, and that they indispose not themselves nor others to obedience by irreverent censures of the abilities, and suspicions and jealousies of the ends and intentions of the Law-makers. It was a saying of *Greg. Nazianzen*, well worthy of so wise and peaceable a man, *Βεβαιοὺς εἰς ὑπόνοιαν κακῆς, τὸ πρὸς καλὴν δουκίνητον*, That any man the more conscious he is to himself of his own honesty and invincible integrity, so much the less prone he is to entertain

certain sinister suspicions of the intentions of others. Christian simplicity, as it means no hurt, so it doth not easily suspect any; and humility and modesty require, that men think others intend as wisely and as honestly as themselves. *Charity*, (saith the Apostle) *hopeth all things, believeth all things, beareth all things.* But it is the Genius of an evil man to suspect every man means mischief, because he doth so himself: whereas a good man supposes every man intends well (at least till the contrary appear.) because consulting his own breast he finds that he doth so. For it's natural for all men to take measures by themselves, nor is it more reasonable that men should do as they would be done unto, than it is common and usual for men to presume that of others which they are privy to in their own bosoms.

It was an ingenious Repartee, that Tertullian made to the Pagans in his *Apology*; They accused the Christians that in their nocturnal assemblies, they took a little Child and sealed their confederacy by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the harmless Infant: But saith he, Since you only suspect and never saw this done, either you could do such a horrid thing your selves, and then you are monstrously unnatural; or you could
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not, and then you are as unreasonable to suspect that done by others, which you do not think possible to be done by your selves.

There is nothing more frequent than for a silly man to suppose there are no other nor better reasons of things, than what obviously appear, because if there be other or better, he cannot reach them. On the contrary, a wise man, when the surface of things is weak and mean, alwayes imagines there is some better foundation at the bottom, because he knows that he himself would not be led by such weak considerations as those are that appear. If therefore we would approve our selves either humble, or charitable, or wise, or good, there is no better argument to demonstrate any of these by, than the censures we make upon the actions and intentions of others. And if any where it be of importance to give such a testimony of our selves, and to proceed by such measures, it is in the case of the Magistrate, not only for the common equity, but also upon the account of the dignity of his place as Gods Minister, and the usefulness and necessity of his Office and Ministry.

Is it fit, saith *Elihu*, Chap. 34. 18. *to be said unto Princes, Ye are ungodly, or to Rulers,*
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lers, Ye are wicked? Is it tolerable to repute our Governours Dolts and Ideots? to suspect they have no sense of their duty, or to reproach their Sanctions as Tyrannical, Superstitious or Antichristian? If I must put the best construction the case will bear, upon the Actions of my Equal or Inferiour, will it become me to make the harshest interpretation of publick Laws and the Actions of my Superiours?

It was an unhappy slip of a great and worthy person, whose name I will conceal, for the reverence I bear to his profession and worth, when reflecting upon the Statute of the fifth year of Queen *Elizabeth* concerning the *Jejunium Cecilianum* or the *Wednesday-Fast*; he calls it *a Law and no Law, a meer contradiction, a piece of nonsense. That it must bind the Conscience if it be a Law, but the Law-makers (saith he) declare it shall not bind the Conscience, and so it is no Law*: with a great deal more to that purpose. Now the words of the Statute are these; it is declared penal, if any man shall say, *That this Fast is enjoyned upon any necessity for the saving of the Soul or the service of God, otherwise than other political Laws be.* Had that excellent person read and considered these words, they would have afforded

afforded him no colour for the aforesaid imputation; for the Law-makers do not declare, that this Law shall not bind the Conscience, but the contrary, that it shall as other Political Laws do: but they take care that the end and reason of the Law may be understood, which was not Religious but Political (for the maintenance of the Navy) I say that clause in the Statute had not the least intention of limiting or declaring the obligation of the Law, but only of preventing rumours of superstitious designs in the end and intentions of the Law-makers. Nor is there any other the least passage in the Law that gives countenance to the reflections he makes either upon the Law it self or the Law-makers. And I note it only for this end, that we may observe how much more prone men are to pass censures, than to consider to the bottom, the true state of the things we pass sentence upon.

But to let pass that as a meer over-sight, it is intolerable to hear the immodest clamours that are raised upon meer mistakes and surmises. Men, it seems, think to recommend themselves as persons both of more than ordinary Sagacity and also of singular purity of Conscience by finding faults of this kind. Whereas did they indeed consider

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either the divine Image born by Magistrates, or the great consequence of publick Peace, and well weighed how much that depends upon publick reputation and reverence, they would certainly choose some other subject to serve those little ends by.

The Scripture calls the Magistrates, *Masters of Restraint*, Judges 18. 7. (See the Hebrew) and as such they must needs be an eye-sore and grievance to all loose and exorbitant persons, and consequently it is mightily to their wish, that Authority should lose its force, and Laws their veneration, and thereby the sinews of all Society be loosened, that so their Extravagancies may be uncontrolled, and their Vices indemnified. Therefore by how much it is the interest of all evil men to have Magistracy and Laws in contempt, by so much is it the wisdom and concern of all sober and virtuous men to strengthen those hands that others would enfeeble, and support that reputation they would infringe and violate. And those that consider this, will not out of levity, wantonness or rashness, controll Laws, or dispute with Magistrates about smaller matters, lest they thereby render them unable to protect them in their greater and more important concerns.

Nos ipsius dei imperium in Imperatoribus suspicimus, said *Tertullian* in the name of the Christians in his time. They then made their interpretation of Authority and Laws in favour of obedience and of the Governour; they did not, as *St. James* expresses it, instead of *being Doers of the Law, make themselves Judges of the Law*, and Law-makers too.

Nor will it be either a foolish charity or a blind obedience, to permit our selves to the conduct of our Superiours in those little matters we discourse of, since we have great reason to perswade our selves, that as those that stand higher than we, may see further, so those that are concerned for the whole may give a better judgement, than those that respect but a part. And that we our selves may as easily lye under prejudice as they; and be as much transported with consideration of Ease and Liberty, as they may probably be suspected to be with Ambition. For why may not they have a reason for their actions which either we cannot reach, or are not come to the knowledge of? Especially since that may be best for the whole, that is less commodious to us in particular; and by being so, it is not made unlawful for

him (that hath the charge and oversight of the whole) to command, nor warrantable for us to disobey. *Nulla lex satis commoda omnibus, id modò quaritur si majori parti & in summum prodest*, said Cato in Livy.

Besides (as I have intimated before) There are no less different capacities of mind than constitutions of body, and as great a difference in mens outward circumstances as in either of the former; therefore neither can the reasons of Laws be equally understood, nor the matter of Laws or the things imposed be equally easie and accommodate to the practice of all men. And consequently those that would have the Laws exactly fitted to their own humour, without respect to other men, imitate the barbarous custom of the infamous *Procrustes*, who is said to have either rackt all those persons that fell into his hands, and stretcht them to his own size, if they were too short, or cut them off to his own proportion, if they were too long: So these men would exercise the same cruelty themselves, which they forbid the Magistrate, and lay down a principle of equal severity towards others, as of fondness and indulgence to themselves.

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Till we can reconcile the divers Constitutions (I say) of mind and body, the several humours and contrary Interests of all men to one standard, it will be impossible, that the wisest Constitutions imaginable, should prevent all scruple, or be alike acceptable to all Parties. Either therefore there must be no Laws made, which must be the ruine of the whole, or one of the Parties must be content upon the account of publick good, that their private Interests or Opinions be less complied with: that is, Since the Laws cannot be fitted to every man, some men must fit and accommodate themselves to the Laws. And this being resolved on, the only question remaining will be, on which of the Parties this shall fall; that is, which shall bend to the Law. And the decision of this will be very easie; for though on the one side Self-love and favour to our own Perswasion incline us to contend for the ease and encouragement of our own way, yet Christian Charity on the other side, requires as great a condescension to our Brethren. And if now the scales seem even, then certainly the consideration of the Magistrate and Laws in being will be of weight enough to turn the balance, and that Humility and Obedience our Religion teaches, will prevail with us to leave it to publick

Wisdom to decide between both Parties.

And then the result of all will be, that instead of prescribing to the Magistrate what he shall determine, or disputing what he hath concluded on; we shall compose our minds and order our circumstances to the more easie and cheerful compliance therewith. And call to mind the saying of *Paulus Aemilius*, who when several of his Soldiers would be suggesting to him their several Models of management, *Vos gladios acuite*, bids them whet their swords and be ready to execute what should be commanded them, but leave the management of affairs to him their General.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

wherein Christian Liberty consists; and that it doth not discharge us from Obedience to Laws.

ALL that we have hitherto discoursed of the Power of the Magistrate, some think may be avoided by pleading the *Magna Charta* of *Christian Liberty* contained in the Gospel. It will therefore be necessary in the next place to consider the true notion and extent of that.

That there is such a Charter is out of doubt, the New Testament frequently making mention of it, putting of us in mind of the *gratitude* we owe to him that purchased it for us, of *the price it cost him*, and requiring us to *stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free*, Gal. 5. 1.

But what are the Contents of it, is not so well agreed on; and indeed it is too evident

dent that few of those that contend so much for it, and plead it upon all occasions, know what it is, or wherein it consists. It was a smart Answer of a *Spartan* Captive, who being exposed to sale in the Market, and there askt (as the manner was) by one that came to buy Slaves, *quid sciret, what he was good for, what business he understood: answered, Scio quid sit liberum esse, I know what belongs to freedom.* Had *Christian Liberty* been all along as well understood as talked of, the Religion had obtained more Reputation, the Church more Peace, States and Kingdoms more Security, and more Souls had gone to Heaven: but for want of this, men have committed as gross errors as that *Tully* complains of *Clodius* for, That he set up *Simulacrum Meretricis Tanagrae*, The Image of a famous Harlot for that of Liberty.

The *Gnosticks* about the Apostles times pleaded *Christian Liberty*, both on the behalf of their cowardly Revolts from Christianity in times of Persecution, and of their sensual Debaucheries: as if the knowledge of the Truth gave a privilege neither to profess nor practise it, when either the one proved too incommodious to their Secular Interests, or the other

too disgustful to their sensual inclinations.

Others, and they also in the first times of Christianity, thought Christian Liberty had been a Civil Infranchisement, and had extended so far as to cancel all bonds of peoples subjection to their Princes, or of Servants to their Masters; and hereupon like the pretence of zeal amongst the *Jews* (in their degenerate times) Christian Liberty was the Passport of fugitive servants, and the pretext for Outrages and Rebellions. And this made it necessary for the Apostles almost in all their Writings to press Obedience to Superiours.

A third sort of men have mistaken this Gospel Liberty to be a discharge from the obligation of the Moral Law, and have been so prodigiously absurd as to take the Gospel to contain nothing else properly, but a publication of Gods Promises or Decrees rather, and to require only a bare assent to them or belief of them, and that those Promises are absolute and without any condition of our obedience, save only as that should reciprocally become us by way of gratitude, not that justification or salvation depended upon it. This is the Doctrine of the *Antinomians* or modern Libertines, and
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is a persuasion fit to debauch the whole world, were it not that few men can be so unreasonable as to believe it, though they would. But it is so contrary to the very name and nature of a Covenant, which the Gospel is styled to be, so expressly contrary to the whole design of Christian Doctrine, and goes so cross to the very sense of every honest mind, that I shall not spend any more time or words about it.

There is a fourth mistake, which (though I will not say it is equally dangerous with any of the former, yet) is mischievous enough and equally false: *That though the bonds of Civil Subjection are not quite dissolved by the Gospel, yet that all Christians are discharged from the interpositions of the Magistrate in affairs of Religion, and that there he ought no further to intermeddle, than he can produce express warrant from Scripture for his particular Injunctions. But if notwithstanding the Governour shall arrogate to himself a larger sphere of Authority, and make any definitions in Religion, or especially the matters of the first Table, it is then and in that case not only lawful for a good Christian to refuse Obedience, but that it is his duty so to do, to withstand an Invasion of his Christian Liberty, and*
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an incroachment upon the Prerogative of God.

This is the mistake that is most rife amongst us, and which hath given occasion to much of the unhappiness of this Age. It is not my work laboriously to confute this opinion, nor do I think many words necessary in the case, yet of the many absurd consequences let us note these following.

I. This opinion makes all Civil Government the most ticklish and uncertain, and the condition of Magistrates the most servile and precarious, that can well be imagined; forasmuch as there is scarcely any thing can fall under their care and cognizance, or that is capable to be made matter of Law or Injunction, but hath such affinity to, or connexion with Religion, as to be sufficient (upon this principle) to raise a dispute of Jurisdiction.

So that the case between the Civil Laws and Religion will be like the condition of affairs that often happens in those places where the Supremacy of the Pope and Court of *Rome* is received, there is a perpetual contention about bounds and limits of Jurisdiction between the Civil and Ecclesiastical

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cal Courts : for whilest the Civil Judge goes about to take cognizance of the cause, the Ecclesiastical will (it may be) challenge the person as belonging to his Jurisdiction: or if the person be Laick and *alieni fori*, yet it will go hard but the cause shall be found to have some connexion with Religion, and so the Ecclesiastical Court either directly or *in ordine ad spiritualia* draws all matters to it.

And not unlike was the state of affairs a long while together in the Kingdom and Church of *Scotland* by vertue of this very perswasion. The Prince or the State could enact nothing almost but the *Kirk-men* found themselves grieved and Religion concerned, and Excommunication is denounced : The *Kirk* on the other side make their Decrees, and the Civil Power declares them null, and grants Prohibitions, &c.* He that will satisfy himself of the truth of these things and thereby convince himself of the mischief of the Principle we are speaking of, let him read the Judicious History of the Church of *Scotland* written by the Most Reverend Archbishop *Spotswood*: And he shall find that this unhappy notion raised and maintained for many years a *bellum limitaneum*, and that it is like the Marches or bateable ground be-

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twixt two bordering Potentates, a Scene of contention and a field of blood. Whereas did we agree of certain Limits, and make the Magistrates Power and Province extend to all that which God hath not taken in by exprefs Law, both Gods Glory and the Magistrates Authority would be kept entire, and there would be neither cause nor room for Controversie.

2. This opinion at once condemns all the States and Kingdoms in the whole world of Impiety and Irreligion, forasmuch as there neither is, nor ever hath been any such constitution as hath not had some Laws of Religion that could not be deduced particularly from the Scriptures. And so he that is of this perswasion and will be true to it, is bound in Conscience to be a Rebel wherever he lives.

3. It is an unreasonable Fear, a meer melancholy Jealousie, and exprefs Superstition instead of Religion, to suspect that either the Magistrate can offend in making, or the people in obeying such Laws as (though they are not expressly warranted, yet) are nowhere forbidden by the Scripture. For it is a supposition that a man may be a Sinner, when yet he breaks no Law, contrary to the
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express words of St. John, 1 Ep. 3. 4. who defineth Sin to be a *transgression of a Law*. And as is the usual Genius of all Superstition, it mis-represents God as cruel and tyrannical, that can condemn men *ex post facto*, for doing of that against which there was no Law in being. But,

4. Which is most observable, this Doctrine instead of asserting Christian Liberty, in truth subverts it, and layes far more severe bonds upon the Consciences of men than the very Law of Moses did. That was a yoke (say the Apostles, Acts 15. 10.) *which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*, upon this account, especially, because it enjoined a great number of little Observances, which by their multitude were hard to be remembred, by their nicety difficult to be observed, and by their meer positive nature, and having no essential goodness in themselves had less power upon the Consciences of men to awaken their care and diligence about them. It is manifest that Law contained no precept that was in it self impossible to be performed, but because it is hard for the mind of man to attend to many things at once, especially if also the things in which his care and obedience is required be such, as are not enacted in his Conscience, and when

when he can see no other reason of, or advantage by his obedience, but meerly his obedience, therefore was that Law called impossible. Now if a man were bound by the Gospel to avoid all those particulars that were commanded by *Moses*, it is plain, the servitude and the difficulty would be the same ; but if not only so, but he be also bound to avoid all that which the Scripture is silent in, his obligation is infinite, and his servitude intolerable. For Positives are determinate and definite, and so fall more easily within our care and attention : but Negatives are infinite, and therefore such a yoke must be properly impossible.

These mistakes therefore being removed, The true Notion of Christian Liberty will best be understood, if we consider, That in the times of the Old Testament, the visible Church of God was inclosed within a narrow pale, and none could be members of it, without submission to Circumcision and the other Rites of *Judaism*. Whence it came to pass, that at the first publication of the Gospel, it was a riddle and an astonishment to the very Apostles themselves, that the *Gentiles* were to be taken into it. And when the effecting this was taken in hand, *Acts* 15. 1. the Jewish Christians stood upon
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their privilege, and would not admit the *Gentile* Converts into Society, nor become of one body with them, unless they would be *circumcised and keep the Law*. Hereupon a Council is called, and there the Apostles find out a temper and middle way for both parts to meet in for the present, which was that the *Gentile* Converts should submit to the terms of Profelytism at large or the precepts given to the Sons of *Noah*, as some understand the passage, or (as is indubitable) that they should comply with the *Jews* in abstaining *from things sacrificed to Idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood*. And on the other side, the *Jewish* Converts should abate of their rigour, and not require of the *Gentiles* the strict terms of compleat *Judaism*. At which decision the *Gentile* Christians were transported with Joy, *rejoyced at the consolation*, v. 31.

For (as I said) till then, none could be of the same body with the *Jews* in respect of visible Church Society, without Circumcision and universal submission to the Law of *Moses*. This therefore was an expedient for the present, till the *Jews* should be by degrees better instructed in the liberty of that Christian Religion they had lately received. But when the Gospel was fully published,
then

then the aforeſaid Incloſure is laid open, and all Nations invited into the Society of the Church upon equal terms, neither party being bound to thoſe nice Laws of *Moses*, nor any other but thoſe plain and reaſonable ones contained in the Goſpel, and ſuch other (not contradictory to them) as publick Wiſdom, Peace and Charity ſhould dictate and recommend.

And to this purpoſe is the obſervation of *Eusebius* in his *Demonſtratio Evangelica*, That *Lib. 1. c. 30*
 Chriſtianity is nothing elſe but the old Patriarchal Religion revived, and therefore is but a reſtitution of that Primitive ſimplicity and liberty that was before the Law of *Moses*, and that now there lyes no more bonds upon the Conſciences of Chriſtians, than did upon the Antient Patriarchs, ſaving thoſe improvements our Saviour hath made upon the Law of Nature, and thoſe few poſitive Inſtitutions of his, expreſſly ſet down in the Goſpel. And that men obeying theſe are at liberty to conform to whatſoever common reaſon and enquiry, or publick Authority ſhall impoſe. And this diſcourſe of *Eusebius* is in effect the ſame with that of the Apoſtle, *Rom. 4. 11, 12, &c.* and *Gal. 3.* eſpecially *v. 19.* where he puts this queſtion, *wherefore then ſerved the Law?* he answers, *negotium,*

it was added, &c. it was a kind of *interim*, or like a *parenthesis*, which when it shall be left out, the former and latter parts joyn together again, without any interruption of the sence. That is, when this *interim* or temporary provision of the Law shall be taken away, the Primitive Patriarchal Religion and that brought in by our Saviour shall seem to be of one piece, the latter beginning where the former ended.

The Contents then of the great Charter purchased for us, and brought in by our Lord *Jesus*, are these ; That beside the freeing of us from the power and dominion of sin, which the Law of *Moses* could not do, and from the Tyranny of Sathan which the *Gentile* world lay under till Christ came ; I say, besides these (which are no matters of our present dispute) our Christian Infranchisement discharges us not only from a necessity of observing the *Mosaick* Law and Rites of *Judaism*, but further and especially sets our Consciences at Liberty to pursue our own Reason, and to obey any Laws of men that shall not contradict the expresse Laws of the Gospel. That we are as perfectly free as those were that lived before any Scripture was written, as to all those things that are not determined in those Scriptures ; and that

that within all that sphere we may without guilt or burden upon our Consciences, serve all the interests of peace and order in the world. And consequently, that neither the Magistrate need to fetch a particular warrant from the Scripture to authorize his Prescriptions, nor we an express licence thence to legitimate our respective obedience; but the former may freely consult his own reason, common prudence and the interest of his Government, and the latter their own peace and tranquillity.

This is true and real Freedom, when with a good and a quiet Conscience we may conform our selves to the Wisdom of our Superiours, and the interests of Society; when I have a power *in utramque*, and may do or leave undone all those matters that are not defined in Scripture, according as publick Laws and the ends of all Society shall require.

And that this is the true notion of Christian Liberty will appear further by this, That the Apostle in several of his Epistles, but especially that to the *Romans*, enjoyns the Christians in their scruples about Eating or not Eating of certain Meats, and in the conduct of themselves in all such matters,

to consult charity towards their weak Brethren, the peace of the Church, and their own edification; that is, such principles of resolving scruples as before I described, and bids them not apply themselves to any Scripture, or to expect a determination of such questions thence. See *Rom. 14. 3, 5, 13, 14, 15, 19.* and *chap. 15. v. 2, &c.* From whence these two things follow,

1. That Christian Liberty doth consist in a freedom *in utramque*, that is, that antecedently to the considerations of Prudence, Peace and Charity, it is equally in the power of a Christian to do or not do any or all those things that are not expressly forbidden by the holy Scriptures: and that where the Scripture is silent the Conscience is free in the general, and only to be determined by those considerations.

2. That it is no infringement, but an exercise of this liberty, actually to be determined to that side towards which Prudence or Charity shall incline, though in the mean time the other side be in the general as lawful as that. Hence it is that we find liberty and condescension or self-denial joynted together by *St. Paul, Gal. 5. 13. Ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liber-*

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ty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another ; and by St. Peter, 1 Ep. 2. 16. As free, yet not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Which two places are so clear in themselves, as no Commentary can make them more so, and so full to our purpose, that nothing further can reasonably be desired.

And so these two points thus gained, will give abundant foundation for a third to be inferred from them, *viz.* That whatsoever is so free to me that I may do it or not do it, according as I shall be inclined by the consideration of Brotherly Charity and Compassion, must of necessity be also as free to me to obey the Magistrate and serve publick Peace and Order in, without either prostitution of my Liberty, or violation of Gods right and prerogative. For whatsoever I may do in compassion to my Brothers infirmity, surely that I may much more do in reverence to Gods Ordinance, the Lawful Magistrate ; which is the point we have all this while drove at.

CHAP. VIII.

Of a Tender Conscience, what it is, and its Priviledges,

IF pleading our Charter of Christian Liberty will not give us a discharge from Obedience to our Superiours, whether in things Sacred or Civil, (as I have proved it cannot,) yet possibly the plea of a *Tender Conscience* may.

This is thought to have not only a Priviledge, but a kind of Prerogative, to carry with it an exemption from all humane Laws whatsoever, but especially Ecclesiastical. It pretends to be Gods *peculiar*, and *exempt* from any inferiour cognizance, like the Monastick Orders in the Church of *Rome*, which are immediately and only subject to the Pope, so this to Gods Tribunal and none else; Nay, it looks like a Dictatorian Authority, and seems to be *legibus soluta*. This (they would make us believe) can limit the Magistrate,

gistrate, null Laws, forbid execution, and which is yet more, change the very nature of things, and make that good and holy which was wicked and rebellious before. This can canonize any Opinion, legitimate any action, warrant any extravagancy in the person that owns it. The man of a Tender Conscience may pass all guards; all mounds and barrs that are set to confine others, must be open to him, *He is a righteous man, and for him there is no Law*, no controllment, no punishment. The tenderness of his Conscience is an inviolable Sanctuary, and he that meddles with such a man, is a *fighter against God*. Make use of the best arguments to convince him, discourse to him with the greatest evidence, he is not bound to hear you, his Conscience is his Priest, Prophet and King too, he hangs and draws and all within himself (as we say;) whatsoever he *thinks* can be no heresie, and whatsoever he *does* can be no sin.

Unless therefore we can pull down this Usurper, we must look for no Magistracy, and except we discover the weakness and absurdity of this pretension, all endeavours of restoring Uniformity in the Church will be vain and useless. Let us 1. Therefore consider what *Conscience* is in general, and then

then we shall better come to understand the grounds and strength of this mighty pretender :

2. What a *tender* Conscience is ; 3. What *priviledges* or *exemptions* it may lay claim to.

1. What *Conscience* is. And indeed the original of the mistake in this matter seems to lye here ; some have given such pompous and Romantick descriptions of Conscience, that they have beguiled men into an apprehension that it is far a Mightier Potentate than indeed it is. I have read of a vulgar person, who first having heard himself resembled to the Prince for stature and complexion, and afterwards heightened up into the conceit by the flatteries of some and arts of others that had ends to serve by him, came at last to conceit himself to be the Prince indeed, and gave sufficient trouble to the King in possession. Men have spoken so magnificently of Conscience, that divers have grown into a belief, that it was some Ghost or Spirit, and little thought it was nothing but their own inconsiderable selves.

It is called a *Tutelar Genius*, a *Familiar*, a *Domestick Deity*, a *God within men*, and at least Gods Vicegerent introned in our bosoms. Now under these disguises men have been

been ready to fall down and worship themselves, and like the Pagans, have given Divine honours to their own Passions; but the least that could follow from such premises, was that the Magistrate must strike sail to this admired Numen. Hence probably Quakerism took its rise, the men of which way are generally a stubborn and incurable generation: Bring Scripture or Reason or any Authority against them, they slight all, and only appeal to the light within them, that mighty Deity, that internal Christ, their Conscience. Hence also it's probable, that mischievous principle arose, That it is lawful to *do Evil that Good may come of it*, in spite of the Apostle: And it is believed that for a good cause and under a good intention (that is, the perswasion of our Conscience, (especially if Providence also smile upon our undertakings, and encourage us with hopes of success,) that it is lawful for any man of what quality soever to set up for a Reformer and turn the world upside down. Nay, so far have some been bewildred by these cloudy and misty descriptions, that whatsoever Humour hath been predominant in their Bodies, whatever Passion of their Mind, whatever Prejudice of Education, or Interest, or Profit, all this hath past for Conscience, and under that name been uncontrollable.

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But now if such men would consider, and loved plain *English*, and to understand what they say, Conscience is neither God, nor Angel nor Spirit, nor any thing that will bear all that weight is thus laid upon it. But is plainly this and no more; namely, *It is a mans own mind or understanding under the distinct consideration of reflecting upon himself, his own actions and duty.* When we take notice of things that do not concern us morally, then this notice is called understanding only, or mind, or opinion, or science, or some such name; but when we consider whether a thing be good or evil morally, lawful or unlawful, that is, whether it be agreeable to such a rule of action or suitable to the end of eternal happiness, then we call this notice or reflection of our mind, Conscience.

Now when we speak thus plainly, a great part of the aforesaid Legendary conceits vanish: for scarcely any man that sayes his Conscience is incontrollable, will say his own opinion or Reason is the ultimate rule of his actions: but will confess he may as a man err and be mistaken, and therefore hath need of a Guide, or some Law or light to direct him. Therefore it is plain, that
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men deceive themselves with Metaphors, with words and phrases.

Some men perhaps will say, That allowing *Conscience to be nothing but the Mind of man as aforesaid, yet even so it is subject to no humane Laws, forasmuch as no man can force me to think otherwise than I do, nor compell me to be of his opinion in the inward sence of my mind: My Mind therefore or Conscience is only obnoxious to God.*

But the answer to this is easie, That though it be true, that neither men can know my thoughts, nor put any constraint upon the free actings of my Mind; yet for all this, since my Mind is not infallible, I may and must needs have something to guide my mind, in its judgement and determinations, and that is it which we call *Law*; and though this cannot force me to follow its direction, yet it morally obliges me, that is, it will be my sin if I do not. In short; The most that Mind or Conscience can pretend to, is to be a Judge, yet is it but such a Judge as is subject to the Laws, and they must guide it, as that guides the man, or otherwise its petty Sovereignty that it pretends to, will not secure it from the wrath of the great Sovereign of the world, by whom Kings reign.

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But if it be further objected, *That we are notwithstanding bound to obey the dictates of our Mind or Conscience before any Law or command of any humane Authority whatsoever, if they happen to interfere.*

I answer, It is true in things notoriously and plainly evil, and the reason is, (not because my Mind or Conscience supersedes the Law of the Magistrate, but) because some higher Law of God or Reason by which my Conscience is guided, hath in that case made a nullity in the Law of the Magistrate; for if my Conscience have not the direction and warrant of such superiour Law, the meer Opinion of my Mind or Conscience will afford me no security; for where those are silent, there the Law of the Magistrate is the immediate Rule of my Conscience; and then to oppose or contradict that, is to affront the publick Tribunal with a private Consistory, and to set up my own Opinion against Gods Institution.

If yet it be further urged, *That if after all my consideration of the reason of publick Laws, I cannot satisfie my self of the lawfulness of the thing commanded, I must then govern my self by my Conscience, and not by the Law.*

I reply,

I reply, That if the unlawfulness of the thing commanded is not as plain and visible, as the Command of God for obeying Authority is, my Opinion or Conscience will be no excuse to me, because I forsake a certain Rule to follow an uncertain.

But if after all endeavours of satisfying my self to obey the humane Law, yet the thing commanded by the Magistrate (however innocent it may be in it self) seems to me as plainly unlawful, as obedience is plainly a duty, I say this case is pityable, and will make some abatement of the sin of disobedience, but doth not totally excuse it, much less make a nullity of the Law. It cannot make the Law null; for that depends upon its own Reasonableness and the Authority enacting it, and not upon the Conceptions of men. Nor can it totally excuse from sin, for sin is the transgression of the Law, according to the definition of the Apostle. All therefore that can be allowed in the case is, That by reason of such a mans unhappy circumstances, his disobedience will then be only a sin of infirmity, which is pityable amongst men upon consideration of common humanity, and is pardonable with God as other errors are upon a general repentance.

2. Now

2. Now let us proceed to consider what a *Tender Conscience* is, and how that will alter the case.

And it is no more easie to find out what men mean by *Tenderness*, than what they meant by *Conscience*. Doubtless when men speak of a *Tender Conscience*, they do not mean such an one as *will endure no check or restraint*, that like an unbroken Horse will admit of no rein of Government: nor yet a *nice and phantastical Conscience*, that can brook nothing contrary to its own humour. These at the first view are plainly vicious, and most of all need and deserve the restraint of Laws, and to be inured to that they so stubbornly decline.

Nor yet on the other side, can *Tenderness* be taken in the same latitude with a *Good Conscience*. Every good man hath such a *tenderness* as to be afraid of sin, and to decline the occasions and temptations to it; and it would be too arrogant and presumptuous for those that plead the *tenderness* of their *Consciences*, to suppose themselves the only men that make *Conscience* of what they do; for then the contrary to a *tender Conscience* must be a *brawny and obdurate*
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Chap. 8. *Compassionate Enquiry, &c.* 103

or stupid Conscience : which it would be too contumelious to reproach all other men but themselves with.

It remains then, That that which is meant by Tenderness, is something betwixt these two; namely, *neither a steady well instructed, nor yet a sturdy and rebellious Conscience, but a weak, unsettled and timorous one.* And now having before resolved Conscience in general to be nothing but the *Mind or practical Understanding, a Tender Conscience will be nothing but either an ignorant or uninstructed Mind, or a sickly, melancholy and superstitious Understanding.* And then to speak plainly, A man of a tender Conscience is such a person, as being right and honest for the main, yet either through the weakness of his Intellectuals or prejudices of his Education, or through the melancholy of his Constitution, doth not rightly understand his duty, and consequently is apt to doubt and scruple and fear where no fear is; and by this mistake (from the causes aforesaid) renders those things evil to himself that are not so in themselves.

Now this being so, that a Tender Conscience is this and no more, a man will justly wonder whence it should come to pass, that

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either the pretence of such a Conscience should be a matter of ambition as we see it is with some, and much more that it should be thought fit to give Laws to the world as it seems to be the mind of others.

However we grant it pityable, but before we shew what priviledges it may claim, we will a little unfold more particularly the qualifications it must have to be able to sue out its priviledges. And in general I have said already, That such a person must be right and sincerely honest for the main. Now of that he that pleads tender Conscience, must give proof in these following Instances.

1. He that pleads for Compassion upon the account of his Weakness, must be so ingenuous as willingly to submit himself to instruction, for he that scorns it, and thinks himself wiser than all the world besides, of all men hath the least right to make this plea. I do not see how he that hath the confidence to be a Preacher to others, or a Disputer for opinions, can pretend to the priviledges of that Tenderne's we speak of. For either a man owns himself an ignorant or a knowing man; if he be an ignorant man, he ought not to take upon him to teach others, but to learn; if he be a knowing

Chap. 8. *Compassionate Enquiry, &c.* 205

knowing man, he ought not to scruple, but to obey.

2. He that pretends Tenderneſs of Conſcience, muſt make good his claim by being uniformly conſcientious; that is, making as much Conſcience in other things, as in that he pleads exemption from. Otherwiſe it will be but Phariſaiſm, *to ſtrain at a Gnat and ſwallow a Camel.* Davids heart ſmote him when he cut off the ſkirt of Saul's Garment, but it would never have been called Tenderneſs of Conſcience in *David*, if at another time he ſhould have attempted the life of *Saul*. *St. Auſtin* ſpeaks of ſome that preſcribed to themſelves ſtricter limits of Matrimony than the Laws did, *per Mores non fiebat quod per Leges licebat, & factum horrebatur licitum, ob vicinitatem illiciti.* But then, they were ſeverely holy men in all their converſation, otherwiſe this would have deſerved no better eſteem than Superſtition in them or worſe. He that ſhall ſcruple a Ceremony, and neglects an Inſtitution of Chriſt, that dares not kneel at the Sacrament, but dares neglect the Communion, that ſcruples the obſervation of *Lent*, but ſcruples not Senſuality or Luſt, Drunkenneſs or Gluttony, that is afraid to *eat* blood, but not afraid to ſhed the blood of men, that will abſtain

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from

from things strangled, but not from fornication: Let such a man pretend what he will, he neither hath nor can plead the priviledges of a Tender Conscience.

3. He that is truly tender, if he cannot do all that he is commanded, will yet do all that he can. He will not make the breach wider, nor the distance greater than needs must, lest he should betray more of humour and stomach than Conscience. He that cannot bow at the name of *Jesus*, yet perhaps can stand up at the Creed; or if not that neither, yet probably he can be present at it. He that cannot kneel when he is required, may express so much reverence as to stand; And he that is not satisfied in all the parts of the publick Prayers, may possibly be able to come to Church; or if none of these, yet at least

4. He that cannot perform what the Laws require of him, may forbear judging and censuring those that do. His Conscience is a rule to himself, but doth not oblige him to pass severe Censures upon all other men. It is a very proud Conscience that will transcend its own Province, and prescribe to all the world besides. If he be weak and ignorant, it is very unsuitable that he should carry himself

himself as the only sagacious man, and make his mind the publick standard of truth and falshood, of good and evil. For in so doing, he contradicts himself, pleads ignorance and pretends knowledge, would be dealt with as the most weak, but deals by others as if he was the most strong and skilful.

The man of a tender Conscience finds it enough to rule and judge his own actions, but leaves other men *to their own masters*. He is so modest upon the sense of his own defects, and consequently so charitable as to think other men may know a reason of that he is not satisfied in. But they that must erect a Judicature for all those that differ from them, and arraign them of Superstition or Popery, that are not of their own mind, shall sooner convict themselves of pride and pragmatikness, than give proof of any true tenderness of Conscience.

5. The truly tender Conscience will freely part with Money, and whatever else uses to be valuable of that kind to preserve its own Innocency and Peace, and is far from the humour of pretending Conscience to advance his Gain, or excuse his Purse. If such a man cannot conform to the Laws, yet he can pay the penalty; if he cannot go to Church, he

can pay his Tythes: otherwise it is his *Money* he is tender of, and not his *Conscience*; his God is his Gain, and his Profit his Conscience. He that comes up to these five points of honesty, may be heard in his plea of Tenderness, and no man else. And now I will in the Third and last place shew what consideration is to be had of such a case, and that in these three particulars.

I. Every private Christian is bound in charity and compassion towards such a man, to deny himself of some part of his liberty, to please and to gain him. That is, in those things that are the matter of no Law, but left free and undeterminate, there the rule of the Apostle takes place, Rom. 15. 1, 2. *we that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. And let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* I say, in such things as are not the matter of any Law, for I may not do evil that good may come of it; I must not break either the Laws of God or man out of an humour of complaisance to my Brother, for this were as we say, to rob *Peter* to pay *Paul*, or to commit Theft or Sacrilege, that I may give Alms. But in such things, as both the Laws of God and man have left me at liberty,

berthy, and at my own dispose, I may then justly and ought in charity to consider his weakness, rather than use my own strength; and ought not to walk over Rocks and Precipices, where I know the infirmitie of others is such that they cannot follow me. For though my own strength would bear me up, yet it were very charitable to descend from that height which I know others cannot climb up to without giddiness.

To do all that I may do without danger to my self, and not at all to regard what others can comply with, or to use my own liberty to the offence of others, is to be unchristian and uncharitable. It is to surfeit of my own abundance when my Brother is in want. And in this sense only are we to understand all these discourses of the Apostle about Scandal and Offence. In those times the Magistrate being Pagan, took no care of the Church, nor had passed any Laws concerning the manage of the Christian Religion; therefore whatsoever God had left free and undetermined, was so still: so that the Christians had a great deal of scope and room for mutual condescension, and accordingly the Apostle exhorts them, that in all that *materia libera*, they should by love serve one another. And with great

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equity;

equity; for he that will provoke his Brother to sin, by doing that which he himself can omit without sin, is guilty of sin in so doing. But the case is quite otherwise when there is a Law in being; for if my Brother will be offended, unless I break a Law to comply with him, in that case Charity begins at home, (as we say,) I must look to my self first, and if he take offence, he doth take it where it is not given, for I do but my duty. And as I may and must give Alms of what is my own, and what I can spare from my own occasions, but am neither bound to deprive my self of necessities, that I may serve any mans needs, nor much less to rob another of his right, that I may furnish him that wants; so the same Charity requires that in all those cases where no Law of God or of man hath restrained my liberty, I there consider the infirmity of another, rather than the pleasing of my self. And that this is it which *St. Paul* meant in all those passages, appears by consideration of the instance he gives in himself, and wherewith he concludes the argument, 1 Cor. 8. 13. *Wherefore if meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands.* The eating of flesh was under no Law, and consequently he should not offend if he forbore it, therefore he resolves that
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he would abridge himself of his own liberty, rather than offend another.

2. It becomes the wisdom and compassion of a Christian Magistrate so far to consider the satisfaction of peoples Minds as well as the peace and safety of his Dominions, as not to make those things the matter of his Laws which he foresees mens weakness will make them boggle at: unless there be weighty reasons on the other hand to counterbalance that consideration. Such as, that the things which some scruple, are nevertheless necessary to Government, or grateful to the greater or more considerable part of his Subjects. If without these considerations he shall however constitute such Laws, I will not say such Laws are therefore null, (for the weakness of people doth not take away his power) but I will say they are unkind and ungracious. But those considerations being supposed, that is, if such Constitutions as are apt to be scrupled by some, be yet either necessary to Government, or very grateful to the more considerable part of his Subjects, he hath then no obligation upon him to consider the offence of a few, but the good and safety of the whole. Yet when those interests are secured, there is great scope for his compassion, and consequently

quently it is the duty of a good Magistrate (as of a good Shepherd) to drive as the Cattle can go.

3. If it shall be found necessary upon the considerations before intimated, or any the like, to make such things matter of Law that were before indifferent in themselves, and which being so made, are likely to be scrupled by those that ought to obey; It becomes a Christian Magistrate who considers he governs Men and not Beasts, to afford means of instruction to such weak and scrupulous persons, and competent time for those instructions to take place, and in the mean time to suspend rigorous executions. For it is not in mens power to believe what they list, much less what others would have them: and it hath always been found that force without instruction hath been prevalent only upon the worst of men, and set the more conscientious farther off by prejudice. But after such instruction afforded and time allowed, if then such persons be not rightly informed and satisfied, yet the Magistrate is unblameable, for he commands but what is reasonable in it self, and he hath done what lay in him, that mens Judgements might be convinced, and Conscience quieted.

It

It is very observable that in the Council held by the Apostles at *Jernusalem*, Acts 15. (of which I have sometimes made mention) whilest there was hopes of gaining the *Jews* to Christianity, and until they had time to be sufficiently instructed in it if they would, for so long time the Apostles used them with great tenderness, and (as it appears) made that Decree in compliance with them, whereby they abridged the *Gentiles* of the exercise of a considerable part of their Christian Liberty in meer condescension to the *Jews*: but after such time as the *Jews* might have been sufficiently instructed, but remained incurable and obstinate, then this Indulgence grew into *desuetude*, and the *Gentiles* resumed their due liberty. From the same consideration was it that St. *Paul* (as I also observed before) practised Circumcision in the case of *Timothy*, which he otherwise declared useless and dangerous. And again upon the same grounds did the Apostolical Canons enjoin the observation of the *Jewish* Sabbath as well as the *Lords Day*, and several other things were both acted by private Christians, and decreed by the Authority of Councils in favour of the *Jews*, till they appeared no longer pitiably weak and ignorant, but contumacious and intractable.

tractable. And as the Elder Christians did by the *Jews*, so seems the Great *Constantine* to have done by the Pagans; He considered that those that had been all their lifetime kept in the darkness of *Gentilism*, could not presently bear so great a light as Christianity. Therefore though he zealously recommended it, yet he did not presently make it penal not to be a Christian, but for a time gave every one leave to be of what Religion he would, to choose his own God and his own way of Worship. In the mean time care was taken, that all should have opportunity of understanding the truth if they would, which when they had enjoyed for a competent time, he then requires all the *Roman* Empire to embrace Christianity. This last instance I confess fits not the very matter we have in hand, which is touching things in their own nature indifferent: But it agrees with the general reason of proceeding, which is sufficient to my purpose.

But now after all this, if the people will not be instructed, but shall be so ridiculous as to pride themselves in their folly, and glory to continue weak, when they may be strong, that is, will affect Ignorance, to countenance Disobedience, I see no obligation upon the Magistrate either to forbear to make or execute

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cutè such Laws as he apprehends for the good of his Government, as I said before.

And so I hope I have cleared this point, That though a Tender Conscience hath its Priviledges, yet it hath not such a Prerogative as to null the Laws, or suspend the Power of the Magistrate in the Sphere of Religion. And therefore this pretence will be no longer an excuse for mens Non-conformity to the Laws and Church of *England*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The great dishonour that disobedience to Laws and Magistrates, and the distractions of Government do to any Profession of Religion whatsoever.

HAVING as I think, sufficiently demonstrated the sin and mischiefs of Schism, and evacuated all the excuses and palliations of it from the plea of Christian Liberty or the pretence of Tender Conscience, I cannot see what should remain able to perpetuate our distractions, unless it be a point of honour, that some think themselves obliged to persevere, because they have begun: A humour like that *Tully* notes and taxes in the *Stoicks*, That when Arguments failed them, Constancy supplied that defect, and that they were not deserted of their Courage, when they were destitute of Reason. It is, I confess, too common with men, to the intent that they may not seem to have had a bad and indefensible Cause at first, they will endeavour

indeavour to give it reputation by the courage and constancy of the Defendants, whereby they hope to gain one of these points, that either by Victory they shall have it adjudged to them, or at least extort Honourable conditions to lay down Arms, which is a kind of parting stakes. Hereupon it is far more easie to convince men, than to satisfie them, because at last it comes to be a contention of Honour and Spirit, and not a debate of Truth.

They say, nothing subdues *English* Spirits but Cession and Condescension; yield them a little, and they will in Bravery and Generosity, give you up all the rest: but if you continue to contend, they will fight, not because it's either hopeful or necessary, neither because they can reasonably hope to obtain the victory, nor because they must be ruined if they do not; but because they cannot brook the dishonour of being vanquisht. Honour is a kind of *Gentile* Conscience, and *tender* like that too. And I confess, though it be a very vertuous, yet it is no very easie thing, to come about perfectly, to change ones course, and to proclaim ones self to have been in the wrong before, to forgo a mans opinion and his reputation together, wholly to yield up the cause we have long
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contended for, without any conditions to salve our honour, without any abatement, qualification or comprehension. For though wise men will censure our obstinacy if we persist, yet the multitude will reproach us with levity and cowardize if we retreat. And though many a man could contentedly give up himself to the instruction of the few, yet to be exposed to the contumelies of the vulgar is harsh and uneasie. This consideration hath, I acknowledge, a great deal of *Rhetorick*, and I doubt prevails with not a few in our present case. I will therefore endeavour to shew the *unreasonableness* of it in these two points.

1. I affirm, that it is no real dishonour, but a manly generosity and a Christian virtue to change our minds upon mature deliberation; and the evidence of better reason. Indeed to change we know not why, or meerly because we are weary of old things, is a vicious levity; or upon new interests to espouse new persuasions, is base and unworthy either of a Christian or a man: yet on the other side, obstinately to maintain whatever we have asserted, is as far from Christian stability and perseverance, as it is from ingenuity. That very temper which our Saviour requires in his Disciples, and which

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is the preparatory disposition to the entertainment of Christianity, especially consists in a simplicity of mind ; and an indifferency to comply with whatsoever shall best recommend it self to our faculties. And whosoever is not of this disposition, it was meerly by chance that he became a Christian ; or whatsoever opinions he hath better than any other man, nothing is owing to his vertue, but his fortune ; and he is not the better man, but had the happier Education. For since no man is infallible, nor hath an intuitive knowledge of things, he must make himself a meer Machine to be filled and moved by others, and receive without discrimination whatsoever is instilled into him by others, that doth not think it becomes him to leave room for better reasons, and further light in all such matters as we speak of, and where Almighty God hath not once for all expressly delivered himself. And those are not only the most ingenuous men, but ordinarily the most useful also, that are what they are, not by Instinct and the prejudices of Education, but by Conviction and Argument ; The former is what he is, but he knows not why : and such a person though perhaps he will tenaciously hold the Conclusion, yet cannot make good the premises ; and so though he will not be driven out of his way, yet may be cheated, and in a blind zeal

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run round to the other extream. Whereas the latter hath not only the stable principle of Reason to assure his own standing, but is able to recommend his perswasion to others, and convince gainsayers by the same arguments that prevailed upon himself. In short, he that resolves never to change his opinion, nor hopes to be wiser than he is, either will be alwayes a fool, or hath the fortune of such an one, or both.

Now then, he that seeing Reason to incline him to take new measures, shall yet upon Secular considerations think fit not to own a change, may have the reputation of a *cunning* man, but never of an *honest*, and shall lose more in the Judgement of wise men, than he shall gain with the vulgar.

2. Especially let it be considered, how much the honour of our Religion is of more value than our Personal reputation, and how much that is concerned in the peaceable and obedient temper of all those that pretend to it; and withal, what it suffers in defect of this: And surely a due sense of these things will have such weight with all those that are sincerely Christian, as to depress and keep down the turgency of our phancy and vain glory.

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It was an effectual course *Haman* took, *Eſther* 3. 8. (and he had wit in his malice,) when he deſigning to ruine the whole Church of the *Jews*, firſt undermines the reputation of their Profeſſion, delates their Religion as not fit for the protection of the Prince, and that it contained *Laws contrary to all people, and that they would not obey the Kings Laws.* There is nothing caſts ſo indeleble a blemiſh upon Religion as when the Profeſſors of it are turbulent, unperſwadable, ungovernable. When that which ſhould ſtrengthen the hands of the Magiſtrate, ſhall weaken them: when that which ſhould eaſe his care and ſave the labour of his Animadverſions, ſhall it ſelf awaken and raiſe his Jealouſie; when that which ſhould enact his Laws in the very Conſciences of men, ſhall pretend to abrogate or diſpenſe with them; when men ſhall ſmite and break the two Tables one againſt another, and put other limitations and conditions upon Princes than God hath; and pretend a revocation of the Broad Seal of Civil Authority by the Privy Signet of Religion: wherever this is done, that Prince or Magiſtrate had need be a very devout man indeed, that caſts a benign aſpect upon that Profeſſion which hath ſo malignant an influence upon his Government. And all conſidering men will wiſh

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great reason doubt, whether that Religion be of God that gives such trouble to his Vicegerent, and whether that will carry men to Heaven hereafter, that makes tumults, confusions and a Hell upon earth.

But I have said so much to this business heretofore, when I considered the mischiefs of Schism, that I shall need to say the less now. Only let me observe, That the more raised and elevated any Religion pretends to be, the more it professes a Contempt of this world, the more it speaks of Patience, Contentation, Humility, and the more it glories in the hopes of another world, still the more horribly absurd and contradictory will it be, that this should give countenance to disobedience and disturbance to Government.

I have also noted before, that it was the great advantage Christianity had for the planting it self in the world, that it disturbed no settled Form, made no noise or commotion, but fell like the dew of Heaven upon a Fleece of Wool. Our Saviour himself was so careful of giving offence, that he not only gave no jealousy to those in possession of the Government, but also abridged his own Liberty, rather than he would seem to retrench their Power. Saint *Paul* when he was
accused

accused by an eloquent Orator *Tertullus*, Acts 24. 5. as a mover of *Sedition*, doth with equal eloquence disprove the charge, and detest the Crime. And that the generality of Christians were of the same temper and spirit, *Tertullian* gives ample testimony. *Externi sumus, & vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum, &c. cui bello non idonei, &c.* Apol. c. 37. *We want, saith he, neither numbers, nor Leaders, nor Spirit, to inable us for any attempt; but that we have learnt to suffer ill, and not to do it, to obey and submit, not to contend with our Rulers.* And *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Pagan Souldier in *Julian's* Army, and therefore the more undeniable witness in the case, gives this short description of the Christian Religion, *Nil nisi justum suadet & lene: It is, saith he, compounded of nothing but mildness and innocency.* It makes men just and honest, it fills mens hearts with virtuous principles, but not their heads with troublesome niceties; It teaches men not to be troublers of the World, but to go quietly and inoffensively through it, with as little noise and provocation as is possible, and so to arrive at eternal rest and peace in Heaven. And as this is the known glory of Christianity in general, so it was peculiarly

of the *English* Reformation in particular, as I shewed before. It was brought in by the Prince, not by the rout of people; it was establisht orderly by Law, did not force its way by popular tumult, and was truly what it ought to be, a revival of Primitive purity and simplicity. And it is infinite pitty, that its glory should afterwards be stained by the insolence and impatience of those that pretend to it. It is a great blot in the writings of Mr. *Calvin*, that after he had discoursed rarely well of the power of Princes and the duty of Subjects, in the last Chapter of his *Institutions* and the one thirtieth Paragraph, he undoes all again with an unhappy exception, in these words, *de privatis hominibus semper loquor*: A passage of that ill aspect upon Government, that it is suspected by some, and not altogether without cause, that most of the confusions of Kingdoms which have happened since, and especially the troubles of this Nation, have received encouragement, if not taken rise from thence. But whether that be so or no, it is certain that it hath furnisht the Papists with a recrimination upon the Protestant Doctrine, when we have charged theirs as blowing a Trumpet to Sedition and Rebellion. And though the true Protestant Doctrine be as innocent, as theirs

is guilty in this kind, yet if it can be objected against us, that our Churches are alwayes infested with Divisions, and the States under which we live, imbroyled in troubles, we have reason to be concerned, forasmuch as we have no reason to expect that our Adversaries will be so just or charitable, as to distinguish betwixt the faults of the Doctrine and the miscarriages of those that Profess it, but will be sure to involve both in the dishonour. For it cannot be, but that either the Seed must be very bad, that brings forth such Fruit, or the Soil very corrupt, that makes good Seed so degenerate; that is, either the Religion must be very faulty, that fills men generally with so bad Principles, or at least, the Men must be extreemly evil, that debauch good Doctrine. And whether soever of these two things be concluded on, (as it is certain one must and both may) we ill consult either for our selves or our Profession, that by our divisions, disputes, turbulencies and disobedience, make the aforesaid dilemma inevitable. And all the wit and courage we shew in defending our private opinions, and maintaining our severall parties, when the common cause and interest is by this means rendred odious and contemptible, is but like the foolish sollicitude of him that shall be adorning

his private Cabin, when the Ship is sinking.
And those men have little cause to triumph
in their particular successes, who lose to a
common Enemy whatever they gain upon one
another.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The danger by our Distractions and Divisions.

IF neither the Consideration of the sin of Schism, nor of the dishonour to our Religion by our divisions will prevail to unite us, yet perhaps the apprehension of Danger may; this therefore I have reserved for the last place.

It was observed of old, that the Conquest of this Island by the *Romans* was facilitated by the Intestine divisions of the Inhabitants, and said, *dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur*; whereas had they consulted in common, and made a joynt defence, they had doubtless either preserved their liberty, or at least sold it at a dearer rate. And we have too great cause to fear the Religious interests of this Nation now, may be endangered upon the same point that the Civil were lost then; I mean, that whilst we contend with one another, and with our Rulers
about

about little things, we lose the main, and by the opportunity of our Divisions and Subdivisions, a common enemy break in upon us.

It is certain, that no advantage can more encourage the attempt or befriend the designs of our Adversaries, than the present condition of our affairs, and therefore unless we could be so fond as to perswade our selves we have no enemies, or so mad as to think them as secure and supine as our selves, it must be unreasonable presumption to think our selves safe in this distracted condition. But because it is observed of *Englislomen*, that they generally (as conscious to themselves of their own undaunted courage in encountering dangers) are less vigilant against the approaches of them, I shall therefore for a conclusion, rather hazard the being accounted timorous my self, than that others should be secure and so surprized, and endeavour to unite the minds of all true Protestants of this Kingdom, by representing the jaynt danger by a threefold enemy ready to attacque them, viz. Atheism, Popery, Fanaticism.

I. *Atheism*. He that hath not observed the prodigious growth and progress of this Monster in this last Age, and what confidence it is

is arrived at above the proportion of former times, either hath lived to little purpose, having made no observation of what hath past by him, or is intolerably over-weening to some private opinion.

Heretofore it was only the *fool* that said *there was no God*; but now this name *Atheist*, speaks a Wit and a man of more than ordinary sagacity : And those that were either so foolish or so abandoned of all reason and goodness as to doubt whether there was a God or no, yet were not so immodest as to profess their Infidelity, as the Psalmist expresses it, *they said in their heart, there was no God*, but made it not an Hypothesis or a profest Tenet. Time was, that only some hated villain, some man of abject spirit and desperate fortunes was thought capable of such black impressions, and that nothing but the brawniness of mens consciences or the hopelesness of their condition could betray them to but the suspicions of such a thing; and those that had any taint of it, fled the light, and were only to be found in Gaols and Brothel-houses : Now the *Atheist* is become a Gallant, an Hector, and this *uncircumcised Philistin* appears armed, and *defies the Armies of Israel*. The general contempt that such men lay under was such, that heretofore they were not thought fit to
live

live in a Common-wealth, but now they have gotten such heart as to think themselves the only fit persons to prescribe Laws and Models of Government.

It is not easie to unfold all the causes that have concurred to the unhappy growth of this extream evil; nor is it necessary that I should now undertake it, yet I presume I shall easily obtain the Readers pardon if I gratifie my own and his curiosity so far as to make a little digression to observe the motion of so unusual and prodigious a Phænomenon.

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And in the first place it is an Observation of the Lord Bacon's, *That Superstition in the foregoing Age, usually becomes Atheism in the succeeding generation.* And so it is likely the seeds were sown in the late times, though the unhappy fruit appears but now. For when witty men shall observe that the generality of those that pretend to the highest pitch of Religion, do either represent God Almighty so incredibly and contrary to the natural notions men have of him, or Religion so apishly and ridiculously (as is the Genius of Superstition to do) It will be very ready and easie to them to conclude, there is no reality either in the one or the other: Especially if those happen to make the observation,

tion, whose vicious and desperate courses have made it become their interest that there should be no such things. When men shall see the most absurd Propositions, and such as they are sure cannot be true, received with the same credulity, and recommended and contended for with the same zeal that the most certain and most essential points of Religion are or should be, what can be more natural, than to think those things alike true, that are alike imbraced and have equal stress laid upon them? And then the result is plain, that seeing some are notoriously false, therefore it seems more than probable to them that the rest are so too. It is in this case as in the hearing of Civil Causes, when it appears to the Judges, that there is false play made use of and some suborned Witnesses brought to give evidence, they are hereby prejudiced against the rest.

And (which is further considerable) it is very probable that those very men that were formerly sunk into the mire of the aforesaid Superstitions, may afterwards when they happen to emerge out of their delusions, make up a considerable part of the Atheists themselves. For by the same reason we gave before, these men finding themselves cheated and imposed upon even in these very points that they

they were as confident of, as of the Articles of the Creed, they grow hence to suspect even *them* too, forasmuch as with such persons those fundamental points have no better foundation than the things that now are apparently false: And thus from too large and prodigious a Creed they come to have no Faith at all. When they discover that they believed many things without ground, they think now they have ground to believe nothing, and from fierce and hot Bigots, become cold Scepticks and Atheists.

In the second place I suspect the lewd practices that have gone under the cloak and countenance of Religion, have had a great hand in this mischief also. That not only the prodigious Faith, but the monstrous Life of some great pretenders to Religion hath made men scorn and abhor the very notion of it. When not only mens ridiculous Follies, but also their Vices, their Pride, and Passion, and Rancour, shall be father'd upon the Spirit of God (as we know when and where such things have been done) when men shall seek God for all the Villanies they are resolved to commit, when they make long Prayers to devour Widows houses, and proclaim a Fast that they may kill and take possession; when Religion shall be prostituted to
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all bad designs, and *in nomine Domini incipit omne malum* : when, I say, the most specious Profession is a cloke for the vilest Knavery ; It cannot be much wondred if such men as I described before, be inclined by these things to think there is no reality in any of the discourses of God, and Religion. For as, if a man were to observe whether the Sun was risen upon the Hemisphere, he would direct his eyes to the tops of Mountains, expecting to see him displaying his beams first upon them that are nearest Heaven : So a man would think if there were any such thing as Religion and a sense of Divinity amongst men, it should be found amongst those that have alwayes God in their mouths, and such a Garb of Religion upon them. But if he find himself disappointed here, and that these men that pretend so high, have as great Sensualities, Passions, Covetousness, Malice as other men, he will despair of finding it any where, and conclude with *Brutus* , *O virtus, quasi vi te ut rem, sed tantum merum nomen es*, that there is no such thing at all.

3. To the afore said Causes, we may well add the perpetual Janglings and Disputes between Professors of Religion, as not only making Religion unlovely, but even calling

calling it wholly into question. When so many shall tell us there is such a place and state as Heaven and a World to come, but every one tells us a several way thither; witty men who know that all cannot be true, but all may be false, think it not comporting with their discretion to take the pains of the journey, till the Guides shall be agreed of the way. The disagreement of the two rank Elders in their testimony against *Susannah's* chastity, whilst one said the fault was done under one kind of Tree and the other under another, discovered her Innocency and their Hypocrisie.

It is true indeed, there may and must be diversities of apprehensions in several points of Christianity, whilst men are of different capacities, and this need not, (nor if things be modestly carryed, will) give any just advantage to the Atheist. But when every private opinion is made necessary to salvation, and men pronounce damnation against one another upon every little diversity, when they make as many Religions as there are Opinions, and as many Wayes to Heaven, as there are Notions amongst men, it cannot be hoped, but that the cold Sceptick should be encouraged in his Neutrality.

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104. But if to all these we consider with what rancour and malice the several Parties prosecute one another, what odious and defamatory Libels, and bitter Invectives they write one against another, wherein all the secret follies of each party are blazed and published, all the errors aggravated, all the Opinions racked to confess blasphemy in their owners and defenders; one party said to make God a Tyrant, the other to deny his Wisdom, or Sovereignty; the one side accused of Idolatry, the other of Rebellion: he, I say, that considers how usual all this is, and how ready all those that have no good mind to Religion are to catch up the darts that each of the parties cast at each other, and make use of them against both, and with what seeming Reason they conclude, that the Confession of the Parties against each other, and their mutual Impeachments of each other should argue the guilt of both, and observes that all the defamatory Sermons and Libels that men write in heat and passion against each other, (wherein they charge folly, blasphemy and nonsense upon each other reciprocally) at last rebound or are retorted upon the whole of Religion, cannot be altogether to seek of the rise of the Atheism of this Age. But whether these be the principal causes of
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the great appearance which Atheism makes in this Age above the proportion of other times, or whether there be other of a more latent and malignant influence, I shall not further enquire at present, since it is manifest, that the matter of Fact is true, and that being so, the danger to Religion cannot be obscure. We have reason therefore better to govern our passions and lay aside our animosities for the future, and to unite our forces in an uniform order of Religion against this common enemy, lest the gravity and piety of this Nation end in Buffoonry, and our best heat and spirits being spent upon one another, or against our Governours, the mortal symptom of a cold clammy stupid Atheism succeed. But if not that, then

2. *Popery*, is another *Hannibal ad portas*, an enemy that watches but till our Divisions shall open the Gates to him. I hope I need not exaggerate the formidableness of Popery to those that remember either eighteen thousand souls dispatht out of the World by the hands of the common Hangman in about three years time in the *Low Countreys*, under the Government of the Duke of *Alva*, or the *French Massacre*, or *Queen Maries* Reign in *England*, or the *Gunpowder Treason*. There was a clause in our Litany

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Litany in *Henry* the Eighths and *Edward* the sixths time, *From the Tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and his detestable enormities, Good Lord deliver us*; and upon what reasons soever it was since left out, it was not certainly, because either their Errors are less enormous, or their Spirits less cruel; but God forbid, that because they at present hide their Teeth, we should think they cannot or will not bite, for if we should be so good natured as to warm this Snake in our bosomes that now pretends to have neither power nor will to hurt us, I doubt we should quickly find it to resume its malice and poison together with its warmth and strength.

If any one shall be so hardy as to apprehend there is no danger of its return in this Nation, I pray God his foresight be as great as his courage; but he that considers the following Circumstances will think it advisable not to be over secure. For,

1. It is not with this party as with any other Sect whatsoever, these have a Foreign Head and great interests abroad, the Pope and all the Popish Princes to unite, to direct, to animate and imploy them, which must needs render them very dange-

rous to any State that is inclined to middle counsels, that is, that doth not either effectually please them, or effectually disable them. And upon this account the *Turkish* Sultan (who hath scarcely any need to learn reason of State from any body) uses the *Latin* Christians with greater caution and severity under his Dominion than the *Greek*, because he accounts the former always dangerous upon the account of their Forreign Head and Alliance.

2. We cannot but observe how diligent they have been of late, how full of projects, and how erect their minds with expectation of some success. They heretofore walked in Masquerade, disguised themselves sometimes in the habit of one Sect and sometimes of another; but of late they have had the confidence to lay off their disguise and play a more open game: And such are the numbers of their Emissaries, so desperate and daring are the Bigots of that party, and so close and crafty are their Insinuations, that we have little reason to think our selves out of danger, especially whilst we have such Divisions and Distractions amongst our selves as at once both incourage them to attempt upon us, and also furnish them with a very popular argument to use with soft-mind-

mind and weakly principled Protestants to draw them off from us, namely, the consideration of the Divisions in our Church, and the perfect Unity in theirs.

For prevention of all which, there seems no way so effectual as that we learn, if not to submit our private quarrels to the publick Magistrate, yet to publick safety, lest whilst the Gamesters quarrel, those that sit by sweep the stakes. And certainly it's more adviseable to sacrifice our Opinions to our Safety, than our Religion and Liberty to our Humours and Opinions. And although blessed be God, we have now a Prince to whom the Protestant Religion came sealed with his Fathers Blood, and who in his own unhappy Exile had however this advantage to be well aware of the cheats and impostures, as well as the designs of that Faction: yet if ever it should be our fortune to have a Prince indifferent in Religion, and who preferred his own quiet before the Civil or Spiritual Interests of his people, the unreasonable petulancies we betray, our untractableness by fair means, and our endless disputes and unnecessary scrupulosities would tempt such a Prince (growing weary of the burden of our unquietness,

and despairing otherwise of bringing us to obedience) to put us under the insolence of that hard-hearted *Pharaoh*; whose little Finger would prove heavier than the Loyns of all our present Governours, and set *Egyptian* Task-masters over us to break our Spirits by bitter bondage; which Gods Mercy and our Wisdom for the future will I hope prevent.

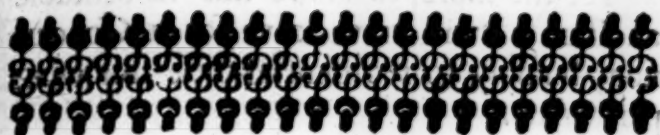
But if we should escape both these dangers, yet our Divisions and Distractions continuing, there is a third danger that I do not see how it is avoidable. And that is,

3. *Fanaticism*. For it is not imaginable, but that the Church growing into contempt, and Laws into daily neglect, that things can long stand at this pass, but some change or other must ensue; and if Popery come not in to chastise our follies, nor Atheism (that damp of the bottomless Pit) come over us and stifle all our life and warmth of Religion, but that we must (the aforesaid causes remaining and daily increasing) fall into a Religious Phrensie, or that raging Calenture I last named. What that is, and what the insufferable mischiefs of it are, I need not represent. It is, in short, instead of Church

Church Government to have a Spiritual Anarchy, where the hottest head is made the highest Governour; where Pride and Impudence are the only qualifications of a Preacher; where Humour is called Conscience, and Novelty Religion. This, for ought I can see, is like to be our condition, if neither the Atheist nor Papist succeed in their projects. But if any man shall be so fond as to hope we shall not fall thus low, but may stay in Presbytery, (though I have many things to say in the case, yet) I shall say but this, Let such a person consider how few and inconsiderable that party is, compared with the vast numbers of Quakers, Ranters, Fifth-Monarchy-men, Anabaptists, Antinomians, &c. and how little acceptable the Presbyterian way or interest is to any of those Factions, and therefore how unlikely to be set up by their means: But especially let it be remembred that when that Party had the Ball at their foot, they were not able to keep it, but lost it and the Goal too, to those more numerous and adventurous Gamesters. I therefore say again, I cannot apprehend, but that there must be a better union and compliance with the Church of *England*, or I do not see it possible, but we must fall into one or other of the aforesaid dangers.

And the calamity will then be so great which way soever we fall, that I protest I think every honest minded Protestant ought to be inclined to bear with cheerfulness whatsoever burdens our Superiours can be suspected capable of imposing upon us, rather than make experiment of the danger.

CON-



CONCLUSION.

I Have now adventured to stretch forth my hand to stay the tottering of the Ark, and to cast in my Mite to the publick Treasury for the service of the Church, which I hope God and Good men will accept of.

Of what efficacy the foregoing Considerations shall be, is at the mercy of the Reader. But if it please Almighty God to give him such candour and so unprejudicate a mind in the reading, as (I call him to witness) I have been sensible of in the writing, I do not then despair but they will prevail with all *Englishmen* that love the Protestant Religion better than their own humour, to Conform to the Church and Laws establish'd; or at least that they shall seem of such weight, as that a few scruples shall not be thought a counter-balance to them.

Yet

Yet the more to assure this so desirable an Issue, I will crave leave for a Conclusion, humbly to recommend these following particulars.

1. That all those who are zealous of the honour and interest of the Church of *England*; will (the more effectually to demonstrate the excellency of it, and to stop the mouth of slander,) oblige themselves to a singular holiness of life. Let us be ashamed that since we pretend to have, and have really, a better way of Religion, not to have so much better Lives as we have better Principles. Let us disdain that any petty Sect whatsoever should outgo us in that which is the great end of Church Society. When those that bring prejudice to our publick Worship, reproach it as a cold Service, Let us labour to have our hearts invigorated with such a sense of Devotion by it, as may not only confute the slander, but maintain a spiritual heat and life of Godliness in all our conversation. For let us assure our selves, this is that the credit of any Profession depends upon; when we have used all the Arguments, and the best Vindications of our selves and our Church, it is Holiness of life is the best and most prevalent Apology.

2. That

2. That since for the bringing others to Conformity, we must perswade them to forgo some part of their natural Liberties, forasmuch as otherwise they can come under no Government whatsoever, but must be either Outlaws or absolute Princes : To the end, I say, that we may prevail with them to deny themselves in some things for the publick good, we should do well to give them example in our own self-denial and abridging our own liberty in condescension to them in such things as are not the matter of Law. And that we will not outrun the Laws to contradict and vex them, but comply with them in what we may without sin. This is that Charity and avoiding Scandal the Apostle so earnestly recommends, of which I have spoken in the Considerations. And the consequence is plain ; If it be their duty to restrain themselves in the use of that Liberty God hath left them, in compliance with the Laws and Magistrate, and for the sake of publick Peace and Order, then it is our duty to restrain our selves in the use of that Liberty the Laws of God and Man have left us, for the sake of the same Peace and in Charity to our Brethren. Besides that nothing works upon mens ingenuity like Cession and Yielding,
and

and peculiarly with *Englishmen*; as I have heretofore observed.

3. That we use no provocation or exasperation towards Dissenters, nor countenance those inconsiderable persons that have no other way to shew their Zeal to the Church, but by reviling and vexing those that differ from it. It were good all Governours of the Church did (and I hope they do) imitate *Memnon* the General for *Darius* against *Alexander*, who when he found one of his Souldiers instead of Darts casting Scoffs at the Enemy, tells him, You are not entertained *ut maledicas sed ut pugnes*. For besides that this carriage where ever it is, is but counted a strong argument of a weak Cause, it stirs up the mud of mens passions, clouds their understandings, and by representing men worse than they are, tempts them to be worse than they would be: And if I see I shall be always nosed with my former Ignorance and folly, I am depriyed of one of the greatest encouragements to forsake it.

4. Though I have (as I hope) sufficiently proved in the foregoing Discourse, that there is no absolute necessity of making any abatement of the Legal terms of Communion with
this

this Church, forasmuch as nothing is required or imposed by the Constitution thereof, but what may be submitted to without sin; And therefore I will not be guilty of the presumption to prescribe to my Superiours either one way or other in that matter: Yet I humbly suggest, that if any such thing shall 'be thought fit to be done out of condescension to the Non-conformists, and to gain them to the Church, it may be done freely and spontaneously, not as extorted either by their importunity or the necessity of affairs. For whatsoever is gotten the latter way, is not accounted yielded, but won, *nec amicos parat, nec inimicos tollit*, it passes no obligation upon men, but rather encourages their importunity, and confirms their obstinacy. And there is nothing that wise men do or ought to resent more, than the miscarriage of their favours, since thereby they lose not only what they grant, but their reputation too.

The Council of *Trent* therefore would hearken to no terms nor Propositions on the behalf of the Protestants, lest they should by some few drops of Concession, increase their thirst of more. But had they had as much of the *innocency of the Dove* as of the *subtilty of the Serpent*, or been as sincere as they

they were *wise* in their generation, they should have prevented all importunities by a liberal Grant of what was fit and just, and by such an act of Goodness and Charity they might either have wrought upon the ingenuity and moderated the heat of the other Party, or at least, having done what became them, they should then have had good ground peremptorily to have refused whatsoever should have been arrogantly demanded. But they (as I have said) wisely enough in their way, considering that if they once came to acknowledge any thing due to the Protestants, found they must be forced upon the same terms to yield them more than they were willing to part with, and indeed little less than the whole, resolved therefore to yield nothing at all.

But as the case of our Church is not like theirs, so there is no necessity we should make use of the same Politicks; for where there is nothing sinful in the Constitution, nothing can be required to be abated but upon the terms of Prudence and Compassion; and if it shall happen that those Arguments be thought fit to be heard, it is great pitty in that case that the resolution should not be so carried, as that it may be evident to all, that those causes only had Influence upon the effect.

If

If these things be considered by those that favour the Church, and the foregoing Considerations be impartially weighed by the Protestant Dissenters from it, I for my part shall conceive good hope that the Clergy of *England* shall recover its antient and due Veneration, our Churches be better filled than the Conventicles, a blessed Symphony in our publick Prayers, and an Universal Peace, Love and Good-will be restored in this divided and distracted Church and Nation. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

THE

It is a thing to be considered by the
Church, and every one of its
members, that the spiritual
benefits which are bestowed
upon the Church, and upon
its members, are not
bestowed upon them
without a consideration
of the services which
they have rendered to
the Church, and to the
world. The Church is
a body, and as such it
has a right to be
compensated for the
services which it
renders to the world.
The Church is a body
which is composed of
many members, and
as such it has a right
to be compensated for
the services which it
renders to the world.
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renders to the world.



THE
Author's Post-script
TO THE
READER,
UPON THE
Second EDITION.

THE former Edition of this little Discourse presumed very much upon thy Candour, that it put it self into thy hands without the civility of a Preface, or so much as the Name of the Author; But the truth is, I perswaded my self that whenas the Expence would be very little in the Purchase, and the Time not much that would be taken up in the Pe-
T refusal,

The Author's Post-script

usal, both those omissions would be easily pardonable.

Besides, I hoped the design would appear so manifestly honest, and becoming both a true English man and a good Christian, and the importance of the Matter (relating to the Peace of the Church, and of our native Country) so considerable, as to gain the attention of considerative men, without any of the little Arts, commonly made use of to that purpose.

But I must needs acknowledge that I had intentions (if those Papers should find so much countenance as to be reprinted) to have enlarged upon several particulars, that (I am well aware) through the tediousness of writing, were so concisely delivered, as that my meaning can hardly be reached, without more attention than can ordinarily be expected. But herein the Press hath prevented me; a good part of the Book being Printed off the second time, before (at
this

to the Reader.

this distance) I was made acquainted therewith.

However I will crave leave to explain my self in a Point or two, lest, in defect thereof, some offence should be taken where none was intended.

In the third Chapter of the first Part, page 73. speaking of the Lord's Day, I said, That the name Sabbath, and the nice and superstitious observation thereof, took its rise from Judaism; which Opinion I see no cause, upon second thoughts to retract. Yet I would not be so understood, as if I thought the Lord's Day was not to be conscientiously observed; for I am so far from that, as that I verily think a grave and pious observation thereof is one of the great supports of Religion in the world. For were there not some time set apart solemnly for Devotion, and were men allowed to plod on in a constant series of Secular employments, without the interruption of such a Time, the

The Author's Post-script

minds of most men would be wholly and irrecoverably sunk into the world, and lose almost all notice and sense of Piety: It must needs therefore be of unspeakable use, that there is a frequent recurrence of such times, wherein men may not only have opportunity to be instructed, but have such intermission of all other business as that they shall have no avocation from the thoughts of another World; but consider upon what they have heard, examine their own hearts and instruct their Families.

That therefore which I except against is the superstitious and purely Judaick Notion and Observance of that Day. It was wittily and sarcastically said in a little French Book, of the late times, That the Religion of England was only to hear Sermons and sit still on Sundaies. And really when either the main of Religion shall be placed in the nice observance of Time, or the solemnity thereof consist in an austere

auftere countenance; when the Day shall be thought to hallow the Work, and not the Work the Day; and men shall count it a great piece of Religion to debar all (though never so grave) cheerfulness, and think it unlawful to condescend to such things as Charity, Humanity, Health, Friendship, or Prudence shall recommend: in short, to turn a Christian Thanksgiving into a Jewish Fast; I think the life and main design of Christian Religion is evacuated by such observance; And this is that I affirmed was neither truly Protestant in particular, nor Christian in the general.

In the same Chapter, page 74. I set no very good Character upon the Doctrine of absolute Predestination: and indeed, as some men hold it, it can admit of no other; for in the plain consequence of it, it doth wrong both to God and Man.

To God, as representing him from

The Author's Post-script

Eternity designing a great part of his Creatures to eternal torments, meerly because he will, without respect to their misdeeds; which, besides the imputation upon his Justice, and its enervating and evacuating all the Methods of the Gospel, doth represent God so unlovely to the Minds of Men as that instead of drawing them to him, it tempts them to an utter abhorrence of the Divine Majesty. For how is it possible any man should love that Being (how great soever) that acts by meer will, and with whom it is indifferent whether men be good or bad, saved or damned, nay who (for ought they know) hath prevented all their endeavours and resolved peremptorily upon their eternal damnation to unspeakable torments? For my part, I do not know how he that should make it his business to discourage all devotion towards God, can do it more effectually than by urging upon men the natural consequences of this Doctrine.

To Man, as discouraging all his endeavours,

to the Reader.

deavours, and filling him with continual anxiety and sollicitude about his final Estate; which is so plain as words cannot make it more.

Upon such Considerations as these (which now there is no time to dilate upon) I thought I dealt truly, and not uncharitably, when I imputed this Doctrine to a Jewish fondness towards themselves, and their own Nation, occasioned by the remarkable favours God used towards a stubborn and undeserving People: Yet notwithstanding all this, I have, and shall willingly acknowledge some good Christians and very worthy men to have entertained this Doctrine, not discerning the consequences of it. That therefore I may give all such, as much satisfaction, as I can, and not seem further from them than indeed I am, I do declare my sence in these Particulars,

1. That though I question such an absolute Predetermination of humane Actions

The Author's Post-script

and Events by a peremptory Decree, yet I willingly acknowledge Divine Prescience: induced thereto by many Considerations, and particularly that of Tertullian, Præscientiæ Deus tot habet testes, quot fecit Protestas, God hath so many witnesses of his Prescience, or foreknowledge, as he hath inspired Prophets.

I am as tender of restraining the Almighty, and as far from retrenching his Prerogative as any one can reasonably desire. I have acknowledged that God did absolutely determine to give the good Land of Canaan to the Posterity of Abraham, and as absolutely excluded the Family of Esau from any share therein, even then when the Children (i. e. Jacob and Esau) had done neither good nor evil. Which I think is as much as the Scripture intends in the places usually cited by those of the other persuasion. And so also I make no doubt but
God

to the Reader.

God doth, and may justly, dispose of all the good and evil things of this World, out of his own Freedom, and who shall say to him, what dost thou? For so we see the best men often in adversity, and the righteous Cause oppressed; and in the mean time behold the wicked, Not to be in trouble like other men.

3. I further acknowledge that the Almighty doth by Prerogative dispose the advantages of the Gospel, and all extraordinary Means of being good and virtuous; otherwise I could give no account how it should consist, That the rest of the World should want those Advantages the Jews had: or how it was reconcileable with his Goodness, to suffer it to be so long before the Sun of Righteousness arose upon Mankind.

4. Therefore that which I reflect upon in the aforesaid passage, and which I think

The Author's Post-script

think I should do good service if I could deliver the minds of men from mistake in, is this, That whatever Means and Advantages God affords to one People or Person or other, yet that antecedently and without respect to their good or bad use thereof he hath arbitrarily fixed their final dooms, and so decreed one man to Heaven, and another to Hell torments.

This is that which I affirm, That whilst it goes about to aggrandize the Divine Power, it contradicts his Goodness and all his other Attributes.

And no considerative man will wonder that I am tender of all the Divine Attributes, since I believe the great Reason of Religion to be founded thereon, especially since it seems so manifest, that in the Gospel (which is a reasonable Service) God doth not (at least ordinarily) give such Rules and Laws of Life as are not the result of his own

Rom.

12. 1.

N^o 12

to the Reader.

Nature, and the rational Consequence of our Relation to him: nor prescribe such things to be believed by us, as are not in their own nature, as fit to be believed by us, as certain that they were revealed by him.

Having said thus much for the satisfaction of some: Had not the Haste of the Press surprized me (as I have said before) I would in the Second Part of the Discourse, in pursuance of my main Design, have added an Historical representation of the Modesty and excellent Temper of several Antient Non-conformists of this Nation, as a fair Copy for those to write after, in the mean time, that cannot yet be perswaded to come compleatly over to the Church. For though I sincerely wish, in the words of the Apostle, that all English Protestants were not only almost but altogether such Acts 26. as I am; not excepting these bonds, 29. as they esteem them, for I am fully
convinc-

The Author's Post-script

convinced (as I have shewed elsewhere) that Law and Liberty are no more inconsistent than Law and Property; the former being the defence of the latter: and I remember an excellent Saying of Cicero, *Idcirco omnes legum servi sumus, ut liberi esse possimus*, Therefore are we all Servants of the Laws, that we may be free.

Yet because I cannot presently hope so great a good, I will not neglect any little accession to the felicity of the Church. Therefore I will intreat all sober Non-conformists to remember, that at the conclusion of the famous Conference at Hampton-Court before King James, when Dr. Rheinolds, Dr. Sparks, and others, had strenuously disputed for an abatement of Ceremonies, and several alterations in the Liturgy, but could not obtain their desires, they were not transported with heat and passion; but ingenuously promised the Bishops, their

Am

to the Reader.

Antagonists, That they would nevertheless reverence them as Spiritual Fathers, and joyn with them against the common Enemy.

And it is very observable in the times of King Edward, and Queen Elizabeth, that those that had their scruples, as others have now, did not, for all that, forsake the Communion and Society of the Church, nor childishly throw away their Meat for their disrelish of the Sauce.

But instead of any long Deduction of these matters, I will take the boldness, seriously to recommend the perusal of the twelfth Oration of Gregory Nazianzen, touching the Peace of the Church. And especially I would direct to a passage in the 263. page of the Paris Edition, 1630. The Discourse is equally level'd both against rash and uncharitable Excommunication, and against unnecessary
Se.

The Author's Post-script, &c.

Separation, to this effect: "If a mem-
ber be infirm, whilest yet it remains
in the body, there is hope of its reco-
very, and that the continual commu-
nication of good Blood and Spirits to
it from the whole, will insensibly alter
and in time amend it: But if it be
uncharitably cut off, or any way se-
parated, then there being an intercisi-
on of all vital influx and an interrup-
tion of intercourse, all hopes of cure
ceases. But, as I said, I had much
rather refer the Reader to the words
themselves, of that holy, wise and peace-
able Person.

T H E E N D.



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